✕ HUNTING
Get Ready For Winter Rats

✕ GUNS & GEAR
Four Springer Rifles Tested

✕ TARGET
MAD UKAHFT Final Rounds

✕ INSTRUCTION
How To Test Multiple Pellet Brands

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BEGINNERS TO WINNERS

Gary Chillingworth explains the differences between competition Training and Practice

ONE-TO-ONE

Terry Doe reveals what's involved during a day's tuition at the range

FROM ZERO TO HERO!

Matthew Gleaves relives his journey from garden shed to UK National Benchrest Champion

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Introducing the new Aselkon RX1250 Break Barrel Air Rifles. The RX1250 is a well-made and accurate budget spring air rifle. It has a high-quality synthetic ambidextrous, enabling both right and left-handed shooters the same shooting performance. The stock also has a rubber butt pad that offers comfortable shooting for all ages. The ergonomic pistol grip is designed to offer the highest control and stability and this rifle has a Truglow adjustable rear sight and a Truglow front sight mounted on the suppressor. The full metal barrel is high-quality and offers a high-performance spring or Gas Ram system. There is an easy access full auto safety push button that sets every time you cock the barrel. The trigger is full metal and is not adjustable. However, it is set to a standard pressure point and position for all shooters. On top, there are dovetail scope mount rails that enable the fitting of any scope.

RX1250 SPRING

BREAK BARREL AIR RIFLE

BLACK £149.99
CAMO £189.99

RX1250 GAS RAM

BREAK BARREL AIR RIFLE

BLACK £169.99
CAMO £209.99

Chose between spring or gas ram, rifles in either black or camo stock. All rifles have the same 550mm barrel length and overall size of 1100mm.

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THE EDITOR SAYS

Hello everyone, and welcome to the November 2023 issue of Airgun World

I hope you've all had a great month and enjoyed the unseasonally warm weather and the associated storms that have come with it. I'm just getting ready to shoot my first competition in over three decades! By the time you read this, I will have already competed at this year's AirAbility Live event, and to say I'm a tad nervous at this point is an understatement. I am really looking forward to it, though, and I'll be writing a full report in the next issue.

STOP THE PRESS!

If you turn to page 61 you'll see that Russ Douglas has written a rather interesting in-depth review of the HITTAC CP258/CP258R day/night scopes. Just as this magazine is due to be sent to the printer I've had word from Russ that HITTAC has now become part of the established Arken Optics brand, and the CP258 is now called the Zulu.

So Zulu, HD, 5-20x mag' becomes the ZHD520, and the -R model (with onboard LRF & App-linked ballistic calculator functionality) becomes the ZHD520R.

You'll soon be able to purchase the Arken Optics ZHD520 and ZHD520R, and we'll bring you an exclusive review of these, very soon.

PLEASE SUBSCRIBE

If you turn to page 26 you'll see our exclusive subscribtion deal, which includes a yearly subscription to the mag' with membership to BASA insurance thrown in for good measure! This includes £2 million of public liability insurance covering the use of airguns, rifles and shotguns, plus downloadable shooting permission slips, 50% off Fieldsports Press books and products, plus loads of other benefits. Whether you hunt or not, it's always good to know that you have insurance cover.

HAVE A GREAT MONTH

As always, please keep your emails coming in. Our team of experienced writers are here to answer any of your questions, so don't be shy. Please do let me know if there's anything specifically you'd like to see in the magazine - it IS your mag', after all.

Have a great month. No doubt, next month I'll be moaning about how cold it is!

Please do drop me a line at: dave.barham@fieldsportspress.com ✕

Dave

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AIRGUN WORLD

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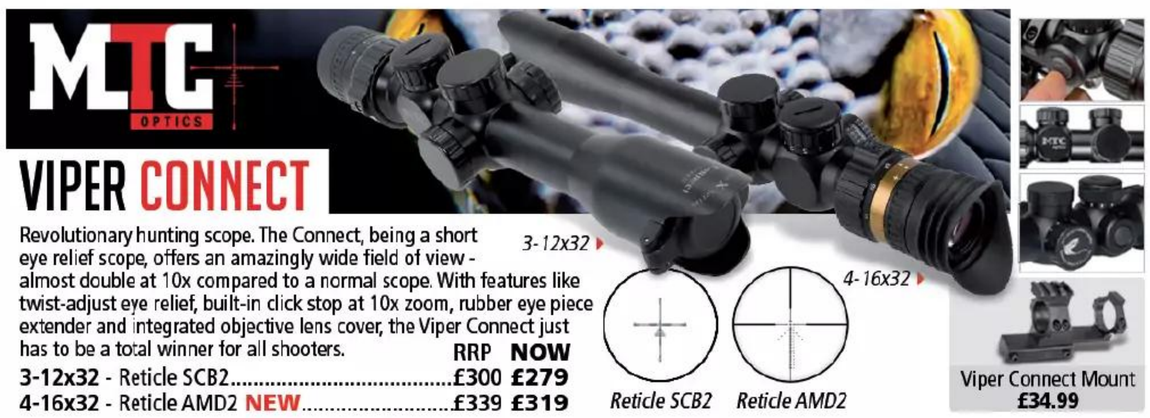
MTC OPTICS — VIPER CONNECT



Revolutionary hunting scope. The Connect, being a short eye relief scope, offers an amazingly wide field of view - almost double at 10x compared to a normal scope. With features like twist-adjust eye relief, built-in click stop at 10x zoom, rubber eye piece extender and integrated objective lens cover, the Viper Connect just has to be a total winner for all shooters.

	RRP	NOW
3-12x32 - Reticle SCB2	£300	**£279**
4-16x32 - Reticle AMD2 NEW	£339	**£319**

3-12x32 — Reticle SCB2
4-16x32 — Reticle AMD2

Viper Connect Mount **£34.99**

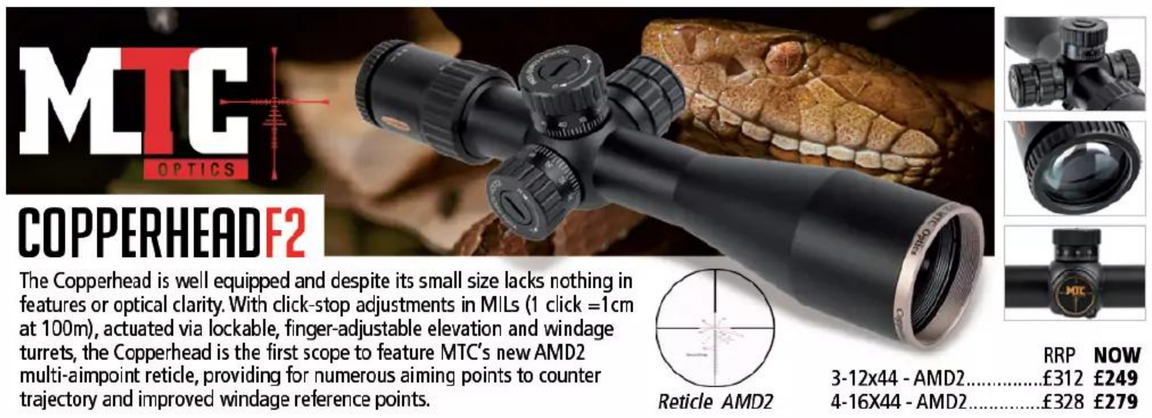
MTC OPTICS — MAMBA LITE

Lite by name and light by nature the new MambaLite scopes are lightweight with exceptional light transfer, weighing in at only 571g yet retaining fantastic optical performance. Even though the weight has been downsized, none of the features of this scope have been compromised, with an illuminated SCB2 reticle, 10 metres to infinity side parallax and magnetic flip covers which include the patented 2x magnifier in the rear lens.

Reticle SCB 2

	RRP	NOW
3-12x42 IR	£270	**£239**
4-16x42 IR	£281	**£259**

MTC OPTICS — COPPERHEAD F2



The Copperhead is well equipped and despite its small size lacks nothing in features or optical clarity. With click-stop adjustments in MILs (1 click =1cm at 100m), actuated via lockable, finger-adjustable elevation and windage turrets, the Copperhead is the first scope to feature MTC's new AMD2 multi-aimpoint reticle, providing for numerous aiming points to counter trajectory and improved windage reference points.

Reticle AMD2

	RRP	NOW
3-12x44 - AMD2	£312	**£249**
4-16X44 - AMD2	£328	**£279**

MTC OPTICS — KING COBRA

Super-clear and bright scope comes adorned with luxurious appointments throughout, not least its copper embellishments that affirm MTC's premium status in the optics world. This telescopic sight appeals to shooters who favour higher-powered First Focal Plane (FFP) scopes, where the relationship between target and crosshair size remains constant throughout the scope's entire magnification range.

	RRP	NOW
F1 4-16x50 IR - Reticle SCB2	£379	**£299**
F2 4-16x50 IR - Reticle SCB2	£345	**£279**
F1 6-24x50 IR - Reticle SCB2	£415	**£329**
F2 6-24x50 IR - Reticle SCB2	£375	**£299**
F1 8-32x50 IR - Reticle SCB2	£440	**£399**

HAWKE — AIRMAX 30 WA TOUCH

DESIGNED BY AIRGUNNERS FOR AIRGUNNERS!

Airmax scopes feature Hawkes H2 optics in a variety of configurations designed to suit airgun characteristics and are available in First Focal Plane (FFP) and Second Focal Plane (SFP). Specialised optics and lightweight design for serious airgun shooters and hunters! Zero eye relief optical system - touch!

- Capped Target Turrets • 30mm • Side Focus
- Zero Eye Relief • Super Wide Angle • Illuminated

AMX IR

	RRP	NOW
3-12x32 SF 30mm Illuminated	£349	**£309**

FALCON OPTICAL SYSTEMS — ENDURA S10i

NEW

The Endura S10i is a LPVO/Precision crossover scope with a choice of close range (25m parallax) or standard (100m parallax) configurations. Features wide angle optical system with wide and flat field of view, even at low magnification.

- 1-10x Magnification range Robust 30mm tube design of single piece construction
- Fully multi coated lenses (Low Dispersion)
- P22i Illuminated Red Dot Reticle with MRAD based stadia and 0.2MRAD holds
- Daytime Bright

P22i Reticle

	RRP	NOW
1-10x24 SFP - P22i Reticle - 25mm Parallax	£329	**£299**
1-10x24 SFP - P22i Reticle - 100mm Parallax	£329	**£299**

ELEMENT OPTICS — IMMERSIVE

NEW

Ultra-compact Prismatic Riflescopes with market-leading field for a better perspective. Unlike conventional scopes, which present the image from the eyepiece as floating distantly in front of you, the image from an Immersive Series scope allows for vastly improved peripheral awareness, giving the impression that you are immersed in the scene - and with the optical clarity of ED Glass, there are no compromises.

- Side Parallax: 6yds-Infinity
- Compact, Lightweight design
- Illuminated Reticle (Push-Button System)
- Resettable, Capped turrets in MOA or MRAD
- Waterproof, Fogproof, Shockproof & Nitrogen Purged
- Tilt-Adjustable Unimount with 2x Base Lengths Included
- ED Glass for reduced chromatic aberration and improved sharpness

5x30	LPR-1D BDC.....**£499.99**	10x40	APR-1C MOA...**£459.99**
5x30	LPR-1D MRAD..**£499.99**	14x50	APR-1C MRAD..**£479.99**
10x40	APR-1C MRAD..**£459.99**	14x50	APR-1C MOA...**£479.99**

LPR-1D BDC — LPR-1D MRAD — FFP APR-1C MRAD — FFP APR-1C MOA

ELEMENT OPTICS — HYPR-7

NEW

"Hybrid Precision Riflescope 7x".
This smart device combines the superior clarity and resolution of an analog optical system with the flexibility of a digital reticle, with technology far ahead of its time enabling you to reach further, faster. With a variety of on-board sensors and a powerful ballistic chip, you no longer have to process information & input firing solutions yourself - It is all done for you in a fraction of a second.

HYPR-7 7x50
£1242.99

- Parallax from 6 yds to Infinity.
- ED Optical system with 50mm Objective Lens
- Programmable reticle, including Live BDC mode.
- Digital Display showing data for Distance, Incline, Elevation & Windage, POI and more.

HIKMICRO — See the World in a New Way — CHEETAH

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Nightvision Riflescopes

High-performance dedicated digital day & night riflescope. Delivers a high-resolution full-colour image in the day and gives you a detailed black and white image at night. Offers 400m of detection distance with the built-in IR illuminator. The 1000m laser range finder, on the LRF model, allows you to accurately judge distances while shooting in the day or at night.

CHEETAH
- Detection Distance: 400m
- Sensor resolution: 2560x1440px
- Full colour in the day • Black & white at night

RRP £729.99 **NOW £619.99**

CHEETAH LRF
- Full colour in the day • Black & white at night
- Detection Distance: 400m • Sensor: 2560x1440px
- 1000m laser range finder

RRP £999.99 **NOW £719.99**

HIKMICRO — See the World in a New Way — ALPEX

Day & Night Riflescope

Alpex uses the same 30mm tube chassis as the Stellar thermal scope but with HIK's advanced night vision technology.

- Built-in Wi-Fi module • Built-in video recorder
- Recoil-activated video recording
- Picture in picture • Charging via USB
- Impact protection • Colour nightvision
- Switching surveillance modes
- Dustproof & waterproof

	RRP	NOW
Riflescope Only	£799.99	**£699**
Riflescope + IR 850nm Illuminator	£859.99	**£799**

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PARD NIGHT VISION — NV007V

NV REAR ADD ON SCOPE

New improved HD sensor and USB-C charging interface.
The high definition OLED screen is capable of offering images and footage with incredible clarity as well as accurate colours. The scope can record to the expandable storage so the important moments are not forgotten

£284.99 · 12mm 1x or 16mm 4x

- High Definition OLED 1024x768 screen
- Wifi Connectivity / Smart Phone Control
- Hd Video Recording Function
- 1920x1080 Full HD Sensor
- Upto 128Gb External Storage
- 45mm Scope Adapter

NIGHTTIME — DAYTIME

PARD NIGHT VISION — NV007SP GEN 2 / NV007SP LRF GEN 2

NEW

NV007SP GEN 2
NV REAR ADD ON.....£499.99
Back mounted digital night vision clip-on with high sensitivity 2560x1440 CMOS sensor and advanced technology. Converts a standard Day Scope into a high-performance night vision system.

NV007SP LRF GEN 2
NV REAR ADD ON WITH LRF.....£599.99
As the NV007SP Gen 2 with the addition of a built-in laser range finder that will instantly show reading through the device, negating the need for a separate unit.

- Direction adjustable IR light
- 1200yds Laser Rangefinder (LRF model)
- Sensor resolution(px): 2560x1440
- 2K CMOS sensor
- Frame rate: 30fps
- Lens: 22.5mm
- IR distance: 350m
- Operating time: 8h
- IP Rating: IP67

1080P — 2k

PARD NIGHT VISION — DS35 GEN 2

NEW

DIGITAL NIGHT VISION SCOPE

Traditional day scope exterior with an ultra-clear 2k display for a truly immersive viewing experience in all weather conditions with contrasted images. Operates during daytime like a traditional glass optical scope and at night with night vision capability for 24-hour operation. Fits on standard 30mm ring mounts

- Pixel Size: 2.9um
- Sensitivity: 0.001 lux
- 30 Frames per second
- 1000m LRF (DS35 LRF)
- Resolution: 2560x1440
- Continuous digital zoom: 4-8x/5.6x-11.2x
- Objective Lens: 50mm F2.4/ 70mm F2.4
- Optical Magnification: 4x/5.6x
- 2x Digital zoom

DS35 Digital Night Vision Scope	50mm or 70mm Lens	850nm IR	**£749.99**
DS35 LRF Digital Night Vision Scope	50mm or 70mm Lens	850nm IR with LRF	**£849.99**

ATN — X-SIGHT 5 SMART ULTRA HD / X-SIGHT 5 SMART ULTRA HD LRF

NEW

DAY & NIGHT RIFLESCOPES

Upgraded high-performance sensor for ultra-high definition with 4 million more pixels for accurate tones, vivid colors and true-to-life visual sensation. The advanced Ballistic calculator helps you hit your target each time. Experience better day / nighttime visual quality and capability along with ambient temperature compensation.

- Ultra 4k sensor
- One shot zero
- Dual stream video
- Smooth zoom
- Day/night mode
- Ballistic calculator
- E-compass • Wifi
- 3d gyroscope
- Record video in real 4k
- Custom reticles

5 GEN — 4K+ SENSOR

X-Sight-5
Ultra HD 4K+ resolution with a ATN Quad Core
X-Sight 5 3-15x.....**£859**
X-Sight 5 2-25x.....**£949**

X-Sight-5 LRF
Ultra HD 4K+ resolution with a ATN Quad Core
X-Sight 5 3-15x LRF.....**£1149**
X-Sight 5 2-25x LRF.....**£1249**

Multiple Patterns & Color Options, User Custom reticles

Seeland

AVAIL

Simple, practical hunting clothing series with no superfluous frills. Avail is made from a brushed, low-noise tricot fabric and features a windproof / waterproof SEETEX® membraneto keep you dry even if you get caught out in a passing squall or two.

Pine Green Melange	RRP	NOW
Jacket	£189.99	£149.99
Smock	£199.99	£179.99
Trousers	£139.99	£109.99
Cap	£39.99	£34.99
InVis Green Camo		
Jacket	£219.99	£179.99
Trousers	£169.99	£139.99
Cap	£39.99	£34.99

NEW

Seeland

KEY-POINT ELEMENTS

The jacket is ideal for small-game hunting in challenging conditions. It features spacious pockets, quick-load straps, and Seetex® membrane, this jacket ensures you're always ready for action.

Key-Point Elements trousers are perfect for rough hunts and working with gun dogs. With reinforced front panels, spacious pockets, and zipped ventilation, the trousers provide durability and comfort for active hunters.

		RRP	NOW
Jacket	Pine Green	£199.99	£179.99
Trousers	Pine Green	£149.99	£134.99

NEW

Seeland

ARDEN

Introducing the Arden series, the perfect blend of sophistication and practicality for bird shooting enthusiasts. The jacket offers ample storage, easy cartridge access, and the dependable Seetex® membrane for all-day comfort. The trousers offer reinforced panels, rubber boot overlays, and the reliable Seetex® membrane.

The perfect combination of style and durability.

		RRP	NOW
Jacket	Pine Green	£229.99	£199.99
Trousers	Pine Green	£169.99	£149.99

Seeland

CLIMATE HYBRID

Seeland's Climate range offers the ultimate package for the cold autumn and winter months. Climate hybrid will keep you warm and dry - no matter whether you are actually sedentary or on the move.

	RRP	NOW
Climate Hybrid Jacket	£299.99	£249.99
Climate Hybrid Trousers	£209.99	£169.99
Climate Beanie	£32.99	£26.99
Climate Gloves	£46.99	£39.99
Climate Socks	£24.99	£19.99

Seeland

BENJAMIN FLEECE

A very lightweight yet warm and beautifully soft fleece, which excels as a midlayer in brisk weather. Being light and quite thin, it is easy to pack and carry with you. The fleece has a high collar, two zipped front pockets and elasticated cuffs for a snug fit at the wrists.

- Full zip
- Super light weight fabric
- Adjustable bottom hem
- Zipped front pockets
- Elasticated cuffs

	RRP	ONLY
Pine Green	£44.99	£34.99
Dark Brown	£44.99	£34.99

NEW

Seeland

TAXUS RAIN PONCHO

A thin and very lightweight poncho that folds up into its own chest pocket and can accompany you everywhere. The poncho has a waterproof and windproof SEETEX® membrane, so condensation does not accumulate inside, unlike in a traditional poncho. The hood is adjustable to fit snugly around your head in the cold and wet. There are press studs at the side, so you can button the poncho down around you. Along the edge are six metal eyes, which allow you to stretch the poncho out like a tarpaulin, to create a wind shelter for instance. Four strong elastic cords of different lengths are supplied for this purpose.

	RRP	NOW
Pine Green	£84.99	£69.99
Martini Olive	£84.99	£69.99
InVis Green	£89.99	£79.99

HYBRID FLEECE VEST

WARM, DURABLE HYBRID FLEECE VEST

Keep your body warm whilst offering unrestricted freedom for your arms and shoulders. Made with a plush, highly insulating polyester fleece with rugged soft-shell reinforcements through the chest and shoulders. A high neck and deep, scooped back combine to offer extra protection from both colder temperatures and chilly breezes.

- Rugged polyester soft-shell reinforcements
- Thick 100% polyester fleece
- 2 zipped chest & hand pockets

Black/Navy - RRP £54.99 **NOW £44.99**

Olive/Black - RRP £54.99 **NOW £44.99**

HYBRID FLEECE JACKET

WARM, DURABLE HYBRID FLEECE JACKET

Warm and durable, the Hybrid Fleece Jacket combines the insulation of the 275gsm Southern Star fleece with tough soft-shell reinforcements on the shoulders and chest.

- Rugged polyester soft-shell reinforcements
- 275gsm Southern Star Fleece
- Zipped chest and two zipped hand pockets
- Easy-grab zip pullers
- High collar and scooped back
- Full-length front zip with inner flap
- Elasticated, adjustable hem drawcord

Navy/Black - RRP £59.99 **NOW £49.99**

Olive/Black - RRP £59.99 **NOW £49.99**

ASCENT SOFTSHELL SERIES

HARD-WEARING, QUIET AND FUNCTIONAL OUTFIT

The Ascent soft shell jacket and trousers have been developed to be worn alongside each other. Both are available in Field olive and DIRT camo to compliment each other making sure that you have a complete set of hunting gear that is both comfortable and technical.

- Water resistant 5,000 H20
- Breathable 5,000 MVT
- Quiet • Hard wearing

Dirt Camo Jacket RRP £119.99 **NOW £99.99**

Dirt Camo Trousers RRP £114.99 **NOW £94.99**

TORRENT III JACKET

THE NO-FUSS JACKET

- Ridgeline's seam-sealed QUIET-TEX PRO™ laminated shell which is waterproof, wind-proof, & abrasion resistant
- Two deep cargo pockets and two chest pockets
- Shooter's hood
- Full-length double-zip & button storm-flap
- Velcro-clipped cuffs
- Generous detachable hood system

Olive - RRP £146.99 **NOW £119.99**

Teak - RRP £146.99 **NOW £119.99**

MONSOON CLASSIC SMOCK

Built to withstand the rigors of the harsh environment.

- 3 Layer laminated shell
- Silent outer
- Velcro cuff
- Peaked hood
- Chin guard
- Waist clinch
- Seam sealed
- Waterproof
- Breathable

Teak or Dirt Camo
RRP £199.99
NOW £179.99

MONSOON CLASSIC JACKET

Ridgeline's ultimate hardwearing and functional smock, now available as a jacket

- 10,000 H20 waterproof
- 5,000 MVT Breathable
- Large Hood
- Seam Sealed
- Robust
- Quiet
- Long New Zealand Style

Teak or Dirt Camo
RRP £199.99
NOW £179.99

MONSOON CLASSIC PANTS

Hard wearing, tough and easy to get on and off.

- Waterproof
- Breathable
- Button & Fly Fastening
- Hip Pockets
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WHAT'S GOING ON

SOMETHING YOU THINK AIRGUNNERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?
Tell us about it and we'll share your news with the readership. Email us at dave.barham@fieldsportspress.com

SCI-FI SHOOTER

Crosman continue to dominate the airgun plinking market and the new ST-1 will strengthen their hold even more. It is stunningly futuristic, with a CO2, BB firing system that can be shot either in a pistol or rifle configuration. The removable magazine holds two standard 12 gram CO2 bulbs and houses a reservoir for 300 BBs. It has a 25-round BB stack in the magazine, which can be refilled from the massive reservoir without taking the magazine out.

With AR ergonomics including adjustable and removable rifle butt stock, safety catch, magazine release button, last shot hold open and a bolt release, the ST-1 is truly tactical.

Crosman also include a red-dot sight in the package, perfect for getting the best out of the ST-1. Available in eye-catching black and white, it wouldn't be out of place in the latest Sci-Fi blockbuster. RRP: £299

For more info, visit: www.range-right.co.uk

LESS PLASTIC – FANTASTIC!

Sportsmatch scope mounts are now shipped in cartons. As well as being 100% plastic free and easy to recycle, the packaging can be opened if required and the contents removed / replaced without damaging the carton.

A high-quality image of the product is on the front of the box in a colour-coded format so choosing the model you need is quick and easy. Recommended torque settings for the bolts and guidance for fitting is printed on the rear.

Available from all good gunshops. For more info, visit: www.sportsmatch-uk.com

NEW MTC OPTICS VIPER CONNECT 4-16X32

No other scope looks or performs like it! Developed specifically for low-recoil PCP airguns, .22 rimfire and .17 HMR rifles, the Viper Connect features super-short eye relief – just 17mm – for a 'through the lens' view that effectively brings you a closer, more focused image of your target.

The Viper Connect's lens array also boosts its field-of-view – almost double at 10x compared to a conventional riflescope. The new 4-16x Viper Connect has been paired to a 32mm diameter objective lens for the brightest of sight pictures in the trickiest of lighting scenarios, and the centre of the latest AMD2 reticle - can be illuminated to 11 intensities.

The 4-16 Viper connect also features a unique cant indicator to assist with adjusting hold over and hold under for those tricky angled shots. Finger-adjustable and resettable .1 mil turrets are protected by screw-off caps and parallax can be dialled in via a side turret from just 10 metres out to infinity.

MTC's Lifetime Warranty extends the MTC warranty from 5 – years to 30 – for new registered products. All MTC Optics scopes are built to provide a lifetime of optical performance, but if the unthinkable happens, customers can relax knowing that all MTC Optics scopes are backed by a lifetime warranty.

MTC will repair any MTC Optics scope against defects in workmanship or materials. If a repair is not feasible, the company will replace it for free. To benefit from the lifetime warranty, customers should complete a simple online registration on the MTC website.

For more info, visit: www.mtcoptics.com

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For a limited time, buy a Delta Wolf from a participating Daystate dealer... and for just £100, you can claim an Alpha Wolf Conversion Kit - worth £570! - that lets you choose between the Delta's tactical styling or the Alpha's sporter stock format!

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Participating dealers at: **DAYSTATE.COM**

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850M2 EMPIRE KIT

The Umarex 850 M2 powered by an 88 g CO_2 capsule resembles a traditional repeating rifle and offers a wide range of features: a 1/2“ 20 UNF muzzle thread, up to three Picatinny rails, a removable additional cheek piece for shooting with a telescopic sight, a polymer stock and a high-quality aluminum rotary magazine. The Empire Kit also includes a 3-9 x 40 telescopic sight, K3 Neo moderator, TMB 2 bipod, adaptor for two 12 g CO_2 capsules, pellets and targets.

THE FORUM FOR YOUR RANTS, RAVES AND Q&As

POINTS OF YOU

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS THE UMAREX NANO SIGHT

Thanks to the generosity of the people at John Rothery Wholesale, we're able to give away a superb UX Nano Point 4 Sight by Umarex each month to the reader we consider to have sent the best letter. It's worth £49.99 and it could be yours, just for letting us know what's on your mind. So it's well worth getting in touch. Email me with your letters and pics at: dave.barham@fieldsportspress.com

WINNER
Congratulations to this issue's winner Shaun Warnes

THE HEAT IS ON!

Hello Dave,
I've been reading the September issue whilst away on holiday – great magazine! Anyway, the reason for writing to you was about how much ambient temperatures can affect the pressure stored in PCP buddy bottles and the like.

A few weeks ago, I was going to one of my rat and greys permissions after work, so I got everything ready in the morning. I would be using my FX Impact Mk3 in .177, and I put it all in the hard case, checked that everything thing was there, and checked the pressure in the buddy bottle, which was just over 180 bar, so thought that be plenty for the evening's shoot.

I never fill to max pressure. I always fill to 200 bar on both my PCPs, and on this occasion I was glad that I don't because the FX I took with me was with me all day locked away in my truck! The temperature in the morning was around 18°C but had crept up to around 28º around lunchtime and continued throughout the day

I left work at around four-ish and thought I would just double check I had everything I needed, and when I opened the hard case I noticed that the pressure in my gun had increased to between 200 and 220 bar, which was surprisingly more than I was expecting.

I knew it would increase a bit, but nowhere near that much, and it just got me wondering how many people actually fill to max pressure, not knowing how much the pressures can increase due to ambient temperatures, because if my gun had been filled to the max in the morning, it would have gone well over that later in the day and probably done serious damage to the seals on my gun.

Anyway, it turned out to be a good evening shoot – eight rats and six greys.

Many thanks,
Shaun Warnes

Hi Shaun,
Wow, that really is a huge increase in pressure, isn't it! It's a good point, well made, but I would definitely suggest that leaving an air rifle in a car on a summer's day is not a good idea, especially bearing in mind that the heat inside the car can rise to 40+ degrees if it's 30 outside. I'm glad you had a great evening shoot and everything was all good for you and your rifle. It's definitely worth considering leaving the rifle at home and making the extra drive in the evening if you can. Dave.

WHERE'S JIM?

Hi Dave,
Can you tell me what's happened to Jim Tyler's Technical Airgun page, which was the most informative and interesting read in Airgun World? Has he quit writing his brilliant articles for the magazine or just taking a bit of time out. Thankyou.
Mr A M Howard

Hello Anthony,
Do not despair, Jim is back in this issue, and forthcoming issues. Turn to page 112 to read this month's technical delve. Dave.

THANK YOU

Thanks Dave,
For letting me know about Jim. I've been a reader of Airgun World ever since it was first issued around 1977 if my memory serves me correctly. Keep up the good work pal, the new-look magazine is spot on with some great writers featured. I've been shooting airguns now since around 1969 at a very young age and been hooked ever since. I'm 62 in

TARGET

THE BEST PELLET

JIM TYLER looks at how to find which pellet best suits your rifle and needs

Helping to run Nomads HFT club means that I get to chat with, and learn from the experiences of a lot of HFT shooters, and one of the most interesting topics crops up whenever a new pellet that seems suitable for HFT is introduced to the market. The last one that caused a real stir was the Chinese QYS, which followed the Czech-made 7.9gn Express, and the latest must-try pellet on the HFT circuit is the H&N Baracuda 8.

The usual sequence of events is that a number of HFT shooters will try a new pellet, and if initial results seem favourable, lots of HFT shooters pile in, and the initial imported batch rapidly disappears from the shelves, which is exactly what happened earlier this year with the H&N Baracuda 8.

Brian Samson, owner of the Doncaster Airgun Range, posted a thread about the Baracuda 8 on the Shooting the Breeze forum on March 22nd, which started a frantic hunt that persisted for the next two months, for shops that had any stocks of the pellets. I was fortunate enough to be given a near-full tin to test by a Nomads member who had tried them, but decided they did not suit his Steyr. I'll return to the Baracuda 8 later in the article.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Outdoor target shooters, both field target and hunter field target, have very specific requirements of their pellets; obviously, they need the pellet to connect reliably with the target's kill zone, which can be 45 yards or 55 yards distant in HFT and FT respectively, but they also require the pellet to perform regardless of conditions. Where an airgun hunter might decide that the wind is too strong for humane hunting, outdoor target shooters shoot in any wind that is short of life-threatening. I vividly remember attending an event in the mid-1980s at Blaenau Gwent AGC, halfway up what might best be described as a small mountain and in a raging blizzard with horizontal snow. Whilst conditions are rarely quite so bad, FT and HFT events take place in high wind, and so a pellet's susceptibility to wind drift is an important consideration. Not everyone shoots in adverse conditions, so let's begin by considering the criteria that apply to all airgun shooters, starting with a pellet's compatibility with the rifle and barrel.

RIFLE

Many people believe that lighter pellets give higher muzzle energy in springers, heavier pellets in PCPs, but in reality, that's no more than a general trend, and like all trends, there are plenty of exceptions, so if muzzle energy is high on your list of requirements, start your testing with a chronoscope.

Always remember that the only thing a chronoscope measures is velocity, and if it also displays muzzle energy, that is not a measurement, but a calculation based on the value you entered for pellet weight. Only a proportion of the pellets in a tin will be near the advertised weight, and so it is imperative that you weigh the individual pellets if you want meaningful results for kinetic energy.

If the muzzle energy, velocity and consistency are acceptable, it's time to move on to the (in my opinion) more important matter of accuracy, or to give it the correct title, precision. The ideal would be to test in a windless indoor range, but few have access to that, and so the best most of us can do is wait for low wind conditions. I usually leave testing until late afternoon, or in the summer, early to mid-evening, because that is the time of day that the wind is most likely to be light. The consistency of the wind is just as important as its strength, so avoid days when the wind gusts and switches direction, and shoot into or with a following wind if possible, because it will have far less effect than cross wind.

It is good policy to clean the barrel thoroughly before testing a new pellet, then allow it to create its own leading by shooting the new pellets through it before commencing accuracy testing. Because you are testing the rifle and pellet, and not your own shooting ability, it is important to test from the most stable position, which in my case means seated behind a table with cushions to rest the rifle on.

The temptation is to shoot groups, and the advantage is that you end up with something you can measure, to compare with groups shot with other pellets. Before trying to shoot groups, I prefer to see whether the pellet can reliably pass through the 15mm kill zone of a resettable target at 30 yards, a 20mm kill at 40 yards, and a 25mm kill at 45 yards, first because it's more enjoyable than shooting at a piece of card, and second, because if the pellet fails this test then there's no point in wasting time trying to shoot groups with it.

PURPOSE

Your choice of pellet will depend on what sort of shooting you intend for it, and we have already seen that, for »

112 × TARGET

AIRGUNSHOOTING.CO.UK × 113

December and my enthusiasm for the sport has never wavered.

Hi Anthony,
You're welcome, it's nice to hear from a 'lifer' reader. Long may the magazine continue. Dave.

AIR WEAPON?

Hello Dave,
May I take this opportunity to object to the use of the word 'weapon' following the word 'air'. Living in Scotland, I am subject to the rules and whims of the Scottish Government. Sadly, we north of the border are compelled to have an 'AirWeapon' certificate before we can legally own and use an airgun. For more than 65 years I have been more than happy to use an 'airgun'. Now, because of our government's policy I am now obliged to use an 'air weapon'.

Various dictionaries define the word 'weapon', for example,

1) an instrument of any kind used to attack, overcome or intimidate an enemy or other person.

2) an object such as a gun, knife or missile, which is used to injure or kill people in a fight or a war.

There are several other published definitions of the word 'weapon', none of which deserve to be linked to the word 'air'.

Please believe me in that I have no desire, especially as a former Special Constable, to use any of my airguns for any of the above nefarious purposes.

Incidentally, my son has a twelve-bore 'shot weapon' for game shooting, and a twenty-bore 'shot weapon' for general use, clays, etc.

I trust that the government in Holyrood will approve of my nomenclature, even if nobody else does!

Your fellow airgun enthusiast,
Ian Cargill

Hi Ian,
Oh that grinds my gears too, mate. We try our best to refrain from using the term in the magazine, in fact anywhere, apart from when we have to print legal changes and suchlike. The term 'Air Weapon' just makes our beloved pistols and rifles sound sinister, doesn't it! Dave.

CONTACTING COMPANIES

Dear Dave,
I'm afraid that it's rant time again! Please free to edit this missive, without throwing it out in the bin!

Sometime ago, when you were editor of Air Gunner, I emailed you about a problem with my Krall NP3. As you know the importer in the UK is Range Right. This was in 2020, if I remember. Well, to cut a long story short, they couldn't have been more helpful. I could even speak to the guy that did the twiddling of the rifles.

Fast forward two or so years, and I purchase a singing and dancing Daystate Alpha Wolf. When it was delivered by a well-known dealer, upon opening the box, to my disappointment I found the barrel to be scratched. Trying to get in touch with Daystate was an impossibility by phone. This had to be done via email. No big deal, but a long way from my conversations with Range Right.

Why is it that a flagship UK company doesn't have a customer service department? In the end, the problem was sorted by the dealer without any help from the manufacturer. Rant over, and a great re-birth of a great magazine.

Kind regards.
Steve Davitt

Hi Steve,
It is possible to contact Daystate customer services by phone now, on: 01785 859122. However, I do know that Daystate has taken a rather different approach to many other companies by giving all of their main stockists some very in-depth training, so that the actual dealers can liase with customers and iron out any problems.
I think this is a great idea, and in theory, should really speed things up when it comes to servicing and any other minor issues.

Take my local gun shop for instance, the guys at Range & Country Shooting Supplies go on a two-day course at Daystate HQ every year (sometimes more often), so that they know exactly how to service the rifles as well as learning about all the nitty gritty of each rifle.

Anyway, I'm glad you got it all sorted in the end. I know for sure that Daystate pride themselves on producing top-notch rifles, and the last thing they want is an unhappy customer. Dave.

Something on your mind? Send us your letters and we'll share your views with the readership. Email dave.barham@fieldsportspress.com

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EDITOR'S TEST

LIMITED EDITION DAYSTATE

DAVE BARHAM reveals a unique rifle limited to just 250 units via The Airgun Centre in Rayleigh, Essex

PHOTOGRAPHY ***DAVE BARHAM***

DAYSTATE SAPPHIRE

It's not often that I get to shoot a limited edition rifle, so when this swanky new Daystate Sapphire Limited Edition Combo was delivered to my door, I was more than just a little bit excited to get out and shoot it. Whilst I'm on the subject of delivery, you too can have this rifle or any other rifle that The Airgun Centre stocks delivered to your door, because they offer a fantastic delivery service, a great deal of which is free! I must confess that way, way back in the day I actually bought my first air rifle from The Airgun Centre – that's how long these guys have been in business!

This particular rifle is the culmination years of expertise from the guys at The Airgun Centre and of course, Daystate, hence the exclusive pairing. Between them they have come up with a unique variant of the extremely popular Wolverine, and you've got to admit that it certainly looks the part. There are subtle reminders everywhere that this is a Limited Edition Sapphire, with etchings on the action and engraving on the stock at the base of the pistol grip, which really add to the rifle's general good looks. »

"Between them they have come up with a unique variant of the extremely popular Wolverine, and you've got to admit that it certianly looks the part"

Daystate's sidelever cocking action is silky smooth.

The trigger blade is gently curved.

THAT STOCK!

The first thing that grabs you as you open the supplied, custom-fit hard case is the beautiful blue and grey laminate stock. The thing literally shines. The second thing that you'll immediately notice is that it has an adjustable cheekpiece, too! This is a real godsend for anyone who wants to achieve the perfect gun fit, and it's easily raised and lowered via a single Allen bolt situated on the right-hand-side – but that's not all you get when it comes to good fitting. The butt pad is also adjustable for height, again via a single Allen bolt.

Apart from the aesthetics, the Sapphire's stock is an extremely functional ergonomically designed one. It is truly ambidextrous and I love the discreet thumb rest immediately above the top of the pistol grip, it just makes shooting it so much more comfortable, not to mention this is where the manual safety lever is situated, so it's a very natural place for your thumb to be, especially when sitting for long periods whilst hunting – it's always good practice to keep the safety on until moments before you intend to take a shot.

"I got to grips with the factory setting on this trigger very quickly, and the relatively long first stage comes to an abrupt halt with minimal pressure required"

ADJUSTABLE TRIGGER

On to the trigger, then. The blade can be adjusted on the post for height, and the post itself can be moved backwards and forwards along the dovetail rail within the trigger guard. This allows you to obtain the perfect fit for those with long twiggy fingers or short sausage digits.

Of course, it's two-stage adjustable too, but as is nearly always the case, I got to grips with the factory setting on this trigger very quickly, and the relatively long first stage comes to an abrupt halt with minimal pressure required for the clean, crisp release.

THE ACTION

To complement the beautiful stock, this rifle features a matching blue/grey adonised action, custom-vented barrel shroud and the ever-faithful 0dB

Check out that subtle thumb rest below the manual safety lever.

A single Allen Bolt allows cheekpiece adjustment.

I love this pistol grip.

There's a short Picatinny rail underneath for a bipod.

silencer. Underneath said shroud you'll find a Lothar Walther match-grade barrel, as you would expect from any Daystate rifle. Accuracy is key, and this barrel/action combination coupled with the OEM HUMA regulator held within provides it in bucketloads, with just a 5fps variation across multiple strings of ten shots during my testing. If you can't place pellet on pellet at 30 yards, then it's simply down to user error.

Loading the mag' is easy; it's one of the new generation flip-up cover ones, and you simply rotate the inner all the way around and drop a pellet in to lock it in place, then simply fill the remaining slots. Slide it into the action and it's held in place with magnets to prevent it moving. Then simply pull the sidelever back to cock it. Yes, this rifle features Daystate's silky-smooth sidelever.

FILLING UP

There's a slim, lightweight 200cc bottle attached underneath the barrel, and this is shrouded in a lightweight, heavy-duty synthetic material, which also has a Picatinny rail moulded into it at the end to take a bipod. It more than passed the 'Dave B Rattle Test' and trust me when I tell you that this thing is solid and doesn't move a millimetre. Hat's off to the R&D team at Daystate for producing such a sturdy shroud without having to resort to the extra weight of a metal alloy.

Immediately below the fill pressure and regulator gauges on the left-hand-side of the stock, you'll find the fill port cover. This is something we've grown accustomed to from Daystate, and it's their magnetic pull/push cover held fast by powerful magnets. Remove it and you'll find the fill port to connect the supplied foster fitting.

IT'S A COMBO KIT

As I alluded to earlier, this is actually a Limited Edition Combo, and as such you get a top-of-the-range MTC King Cobra 4-16 x 50 scope supplied, along with Blueprint adjustable mounts. You also get a single-shot tray, as well as a 13-shot magazine (11 shot for the .22 model), plus a test certificate from The Airgun Centre, a Limited Edition Certificate and a pack of targets to get you going.

ON THE RANGE

I spent a good couple of hours on my back garden range, basically 'plinking' at paper and knock-downs, but I soon got bored with that – this rifle is so accurate I found myself needing to test myself a bit more, and that meant heading to a longer range.

After re-zeroing at 30 metres I set to work on the 40-yard spinners, then

There is a magnetic fill port cover.

Daystate only uses the best HUMA regulators.

The trigger post position can be adjusted along the sliding dovetail rail.

The magazine is held in place via magnets.

gradually pushed my way out to the 50-metre knock-downs, and it really didn't take too long for me to become acquainted with the MTC scope and the holdover points I required for said distances. Sure, I missed a few like we all do, but I was hitting way more than I missed at that extreme distance with this lovely rifle. Not only is this rifle a real collector's item, but it's profoundly functional, to boot!

Would I buy one if I had the money? Of course I would, but I would definitely be using it regularly rather than keeping it locked away in the case!

COVERED FOR LIFE!

If you love collecting air rifles, then this is certainly one you'll be wanting to take a look at. What's more, if you do purchase one you'll also receive a unique lifetime guarantee, which gives you FREE servicing for life – including parts and labour! ✕

Loading the filp-cover mag' is easy.

"I missed a few like we all do, but I was hitting way more than I missed at that extreme distance with this lovely rifle. Not only is this rifle a real collector's item, but it's profoundly functional, to boot"

That etching and colour really suits.

TECH SPEC

Model: Limited Sapphire Edition
Manufacturer: Daystate
Retailer: The Airgun Centre
Country of Origin: UK/Italy
Type: Multi-shot regulated PCP
Calibre: .177 or .22
Weight: 7.9lbs (3.6kg)
Overall Length: 965mm (38in)
Barrel Length: 430mm (17in)
Stock: Ambidextrous Blue/Grey Laminate
Trigger: 2-stage adjustable
Safety: Manual
Bottle Capacity: 200cc
Max Fill Pressure: 230 bar
Mag' Capacity: 11 (.22) and 13 (.177)
Shot Count: Around 250 shots .22/ 200 shots .177
Muzzle Energy: 11.4 ft.lbs. 5fps variation over 10 shots
Website: www.theairguncentre.com
PRICE: RRP £2699

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AND WHERE WE ARE **HEADING.**

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BEGINNERS TO WINNERS

GARY CHILLINGWORTH explains his reasonings behind two commonly confused words in the world of competetive shooting - Training and Practice

At a recent shoot, a very nice chap asked me a question that taxed my tiny mind.

"Gary," he said. "I practise my shooting and I'm not getting any better. What should I do?'

I asked what his practice involved and he told me that on a Thursday he would go to his club and shoot the course and then spend some time on the benches of the plinking range. So, we sat down and discussed the difference between training and practice, and I hope that today's article will help you as well.

OK, there is a big difference between practice and training. If we think about the 'Rocky' films, the training that Rock did was the running, the bag, the speed ball and the chasing of chickens. This is all designed to build muscle memory. The practice is putting this all together, so for Rocky, this would be sparing and for us, it will be the practice comps that we take part in.

We need to train properly, so the first thing that we need to do is build a structure and make sure that we write everything down because training without analysing does have a benefit, but it won't ever be as effective. »

SET IT ALL UP

We also need to make sure that the rifle and scope are set correctly and are as accurate as can be. So, always start with a few shots over the chronograph, to make sure that the rifle is consistent and at the power that you are happy with; make a note of the temperature that you are testing at, and when you are making your range card, write this temp on the back. Remember that guns and scopes are affected by weather, if you have a PCP, it will get faster when it's warm and slower when it's cold; with a springer it's the other way round and on a warm day, you can lose 10 to 15fps. So, it's worth making a range card for summer, winter and normal conditions.

Once you know that your rifle is consistent, check your pellets. I recently had a tin that varied from 7.8 to 8.9 grains, and this is enough to make you fail a chronograph, but shooting a 7.9grn pellet at a 40-yard, 25mm target would cause you to miss high if you thought you were shooting a 8.44. So learn your pellets and if your batch is a bit dodgy, then the night before a competition, weigh out 50 pellets and make sure they are all between 8.3 and 8.6grns, all the others that are outside this, keep them for standing and kneeling practice.

PARALLAX ERROR

The next step is to build muscle memory and get that head centralised behind the scope for every shot. It's vitally important that you learn to get your head in the correct position each time you shoot. More targets are missed through parallax error than for any other reason

Shooting from the bench is great, but if you compete prone, train prone.

Check the temperature of the gun before you shoot, and write it down.

and if you are not familiar with it, try this test. If your scope is set to a parallax at 30 yards, look at a 30-yard targets and move your head about – you will see that the crosshairs will not move. Now look at a 20- or 40-yard target and try the same thing. Your cross hairs will move a mil-dot up and down, left and right, and this is certainly enough to miss a target. So, getting your head in a consistent position every time is vital.

What I do on a long target is measure the error top to bottom; if it's one mil-dot, then I move my head high and then down half a mil-dot, so this is the middle of the error. I do that on every shot, so I know that I'm always training and shooting from the middle of the scope. I hope that makes sense.

CORE TRAINING

I'm on the range on a nice calm day and I shoot paper. Every time I load and shoot, I take my head off the gun, load, centralise my eye and shoot. As I'm an HFT shooter, then I do this prone; if I did it from a bench, I would get a false zero because shooting from a bench is very different to shooting prone, so always train in the way that you are going to shoot. Once I have got to a place where I am shooting the best groups I can at 40 yards, I place paper out from 8 to 45 yards and make a range card. So, I now know what my aim points are for all

"It's vitally important that you learn to get your head in the correct position each time you shoot. More targets are missed through parallax error"

the targets that I will shoot.

So, this is the gun set-up it its most basic sense and I am now able to pick the rifle up and shoot accurately from a prone position. This is my core training and it's is something that I now need to build on.

HFT shooters shoot from a peg and most of the time the butt of the rifle will be rested on the ground, but every now and then, you will be forced to come up the peg, or off to the other side of the peg, or off the peg completely, so these types of shots all need to be practised.

For my training, I set out a card and transition from off the deck to up the peg, to spider hand, to the wrong side of the peg. By shooting paper, I know that up the peg my pellets hit low and a little left, and this is because of an astigmatism in my eye.

ELEVATED TARGETS

Then it's time to think about elevation. I'm lucky because I have a home range and I'm able to set up ladders with targets, but if you can't do this, get to a club and instead of shooting the killzones on the practice ranges, shoot the plate and see where your pellets hit. For my spring gun, I know that if I crank my head back to see a target, I shoot the bottom of the kill because the pellet will rise (Riflemans' rule), but If I'm comfortable looking at the target, then I don't need to worry.

Basically, training is about shooting with a plan. You need to build consistency in your rifle and yourself; learn when the gun will do funny things, and what conditions will cause you to miss a target.

Next month, we will look at shooting in the wind and how to improve with supported kneelers and standers. We might even look at human factors and how nutrition and mindset can affect your shooting.

If you want to get hold of me then drop me an email at lifeattherange@gmail.com and I will always try toget back to you. Gary ✕

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GARDEN GUNNER!

What do field target shooters do when they leave the FT circuit? This one just redirected his aim. ***TERRY DOE*** meets up with his former teammate, ***IAN 'GILLY' GILMOUR***

My mate Gilly is a bit of a legend. A million years ago, when we were hyper-enthusiastic members of the Markyate Field Target Club, Gilly and I, along with a complete crew of similarly motivated airgunners, would chase silverware up and down the country. As recently recalled in this magazine, the 'FT years' produced some of the best days of my life, and Gilly was a major part of all that. His permanent positivity, infectious sense of humour and relentless mickey-taking, mainly at his own expense, always heightened the competition experience, and made days at the club so much more enjoyable. Gilly was, and still is, just good to be around.

Like me, he's retired now, and although we've always kept in touch, I thought it was time to visit him, and find out if, also like me, he still loved his shooting. It turns out, some things never change.

NEW LOCATION – SAME OLD GILLY

It took me a full four hours to make the trip from Surrey to the lovely bit of Wales that is Gilly's preferred retirement location. The M4 motorway was kind to me, and even the middle lane owners' club took the day off, so I crested into Gilly's driveway feeling refreshed and keen to see my dear old mate.

As I stepped from the car, I heard a loud shout, in the worst impression of a Welsh accent imaginable, of 'GET ORF MOI LAAAAAAND, YOU ENGLISH INVADER!' before the source of the abuse poked his head out of a nearby window, grinning his trademark grin. It was great to see Gilly again, and over

The legendary Sportsmatch GC2. Still shooting one-hole groups at silly ranges.

the next hour or so, we discussed our shared passion for fishing, gardening, and of course, shooting.

GILLY ON PATROL

Gilly has built a wonderful garden, here, and he shares it with his beloved dog, Fritz, and often his grandson, Nathaniel, and any of the family and friends who call in to enjoy Gilly's company, and his considerable hospitality. Gilly's a caring, sharing kind of chap, but there are limits.

He won't tolerate rats in his garden, at any cost, and until recently he waged a war on magpies to protect the songbirds. Last year, the ability to shoot magpies was removed from the Welsh General Licence, and Gilly's not happy about it.

He told me, "I've not only seen magpies scouring the ivy and hedges to take newly-fledged songbirds, I've also witnessed them pulling baby blue tits from the nest boxes in my garden! I don't know who decided that magpies don't have an adverse effect on songbird numbers, because wherever I've lived, I've seen magpies killing songbird chicks. I'd like to say to whoever came up with the idea of giving magpies a free pass to slaughter songbirds, what my schoolteachers used to say to me – 'show your working-out!'"

ADAPT AND OVERCOME

This year, Gilly's songbird protection strategy has been adapted, and at the most perilous time of year for 'his' songbirds, when they're about to leave the nest and shortly after, Gilly's on patrol in the garden as much as possible.

"These days, I'm shouting at magpies, rather than shooting at them, but I'm still an effective deterrent, and I've seen two broods of blue tits raised in my main nest box, plus several more, mainly robins, sparrows, and goldfinches, fledge successfully from other areas in and near the garden. It's hard work, mind, and it would be an impossible job on a larger area of land, so I dread to think what the overall effect of this new legislation will be."

NO SANCTUARY FOR RATS

Gilly's shooting efforts are now directed entirely at rats, plus a bit of target practice to keep him sharp, and because he still loves his shooting. As a direct link to his FT past, Gilly uses his superb Sportsmatch GC2, once the ultimate pre-charged pneumatic. Sportsmatch founder, the late, and certainly great, John Ford, was a close friend of Gilly's, and when Gilly became the proud owner of a GC2, serial number 004,

These days, Gilly uses any aim-stabilisation device he can find!

Fritz is just one of the reasons Gilly runs a total anti-rat regime in his garden.

John commissioned John Welham of Airmasters to add a rosewood heel to the rifle's grip, 'to make it a bit special.' All GC2s are special, and Gilly's still shoots single-hole groups at silly ranges. It nails rats, too, and Gilly's anti-rat campaign is conducted on a round-the-clock basis, courtesy of a Pard 7 night-vision sight.

Gilly said, "As you know, rats carry Weil's disease, and I saw a mate's dog die from that, and there's no way my dog's going to go through that. Plus, with my grandson playing in the garden, there's no place for rats, here. I don't use poison, so it's all about enclosed traps and mainly shooting them, and I'm not letting up!"

GREAT BLOKE, GREAT LIFE

I spent a couple of days with Gilly, and it was great to see how much he's enjoying his life, these days. The infectious grin is still there, as is his love of shooting, and left him hollering, 'GORN BACK TO THAT ENGLAND, YOU HORRIBLE HEATHEN!' as I drove away. I was still smiling to myself when I crossed the Prince Of Wales Bridge, and headed homeward. Good people deserve to have good lives, and my mate Gilly is one of the best. ✕

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GET READY FOR RATS!

Peak ratting season is fast approaching – ***MAT MANNING*** shares some tips to help you make the most of your nights on the farmyard

The boom time for rat shooting is just around the corner. Although some farms hold a few of these disease-spreading rodents right through the year, the biggest influx usually arrives after harvest. As food becomes scarce out on the open countryside, and the weather becomes colder and wetter, more and more rats head to the farmyard in search of easy pickings and refuge from the elements. This can cause serious problems with rats contaminating stored crops and water supplies, stealing animal feed, chewing through wires and undermining buildings with their burrows.

Airgun shooters can offer a poison-free pest control service to farmers suffering with infestations of rats, and a few tweaks to your approach can make a big difference to your results, optimising your nights out so you can do the best possible job and enjoy some great shooting while you're at it. Here is how I go about tackling this notorious pest.

»

"Untidy holdings tend to hold more rats than neatly-kept ones. Yards with crumbling walls, overgrown ditches and heaps of tyres, rubble and pallets"

LOCATION, LOCATION

As winter tightens its grip on the countryside, rats will be looking for easy sources of food and a sheltered place where they can avoid the worst of the weather – the best places for ratting will be the ones that meet those requirements.

Pig and poultry farms are real favourites because they provide plenty of feeding opportunities, and dairy farms are good places to target – rats will be attracted by cattle feed. Arable farms can also be productive – rats soon home in on grain stores. If you don't have a farmyard permission, stables, compost heaps and pheasant feeders can also attract rats.

Untidy holdings tend to hold more rats than neatly kept ones. Yards with crumbling walls, overgrown ditches and heaps of tyres, rubble and pallets scattered about offer rats lots of places to burrow and establish nests.

THE RIGHT TIME

Rat behaviour varies from farm to farm, and the best way to find out when they are most active on your ground is to get out there and find out for yourself. As a rule of thumb, they tend to be most active at night, although I have known farms where they can be encountered by day; one of these places was hunted heavily by owls and the rats had learned to avoid their attacks by feeding by day and holing up after dark.

If your farm is a typical one where rats are busiest at night, don't overlook the last hour or so of daylight. Rats can suddenly become extremely active just as the light starts to fade and it's easy to miss the most productive period by

Traditional, untidy farms usually offer better habitat for rats than clean, modern holdings.

Pre-charged airguns with multi-shot magazines lend themselves well to rat shooting.

Infrared night-vision scopes produce a sharp image with good detail, and won't blow your cover.

waiting until darkness has closed in completely.

GUNS AND AMMO

Any sub-12ft.lbs. airgun will kill rats, as long as its accurate enough to shoot them in the head – bearing in mind that most shots are likely to be taken at less than 20m. Ratting tends to take place around the confines of farm buildings, and often close to livestock and machinery. The relatively low power of a legal limit air rifle is a real asset in these situations, where it's simply too dangerous to use a gun with more grunt.

Whilst I used to use a simple break-barrel springer back in the day, there is no denying that modern PCPs make an easier job of it. Their recoilless firing cycle assists with accurate pellet placement and, most significantly, having a multi-shot magazine saves a lot of fumbling around with pellets to reload.

Shorter models can be advantageous. A stubby barrel is less likely to get bashed if you're shooting in cramped conditions inside a building. If you're worried about scraping the woodwork on an airgun with a traditional stock, you might be better off with a more functional synthetic handle. I regard a silencer as a must because a quiet airgun is less likely to put rats on edge, or spook any livestock that might be nearby.

As for which calibre to choose, I don't expect to see the .177 vs .22 debate settled anytime soon, so go for whichever you favour. The truth is, whichever calibre you're using, the result is a dead rat as long as you hit it solidly in the top of the skull. For this reason, I tend to pair my airguns with the pellets that deliver the best accuracy, and that's usually quality domed ones.

SIGHTS AND SPOTTERS

I have used a normal day scope mounted with a lamp to shoot thousands of rats over the years, and shooters on a tight budget will be pleased to hear that this set-up still works as well as ever. Features to look out for on a lamp include; an angle-adjustable mount, adjustable power so you can wind down brightness and perhaps the option to change the colour of the beam, both of which can help to prevent the light from spooking skittish rats.

For shooters who can afford the outlay, modern digital optics will give you an edge, mostly because the lack of light means rats won's see you. If money is no object, there are some great thermal gunsights out there, but I still prefer infrared night-vision. Apart from costing less, the latter option tends to show more detail of what is around and behind your target, which really helps with safe shooting.

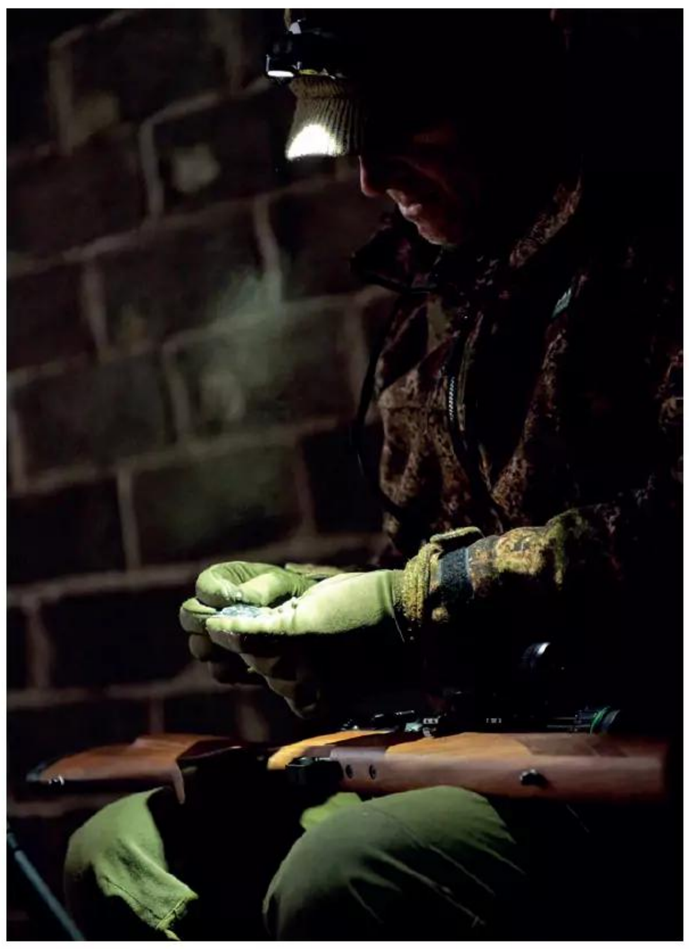
When choosing your night optic, choose performance over gimmicks. Important factors to consider include size, weight, image quality, rangefinder, magnification, battery run-time and how they mount to your gun. The ability to save photos and video will also be important to shooters who want to capture and share the action.

If you can justify the outlay, a thermal spotter is a very useful tool for rat shooting. This technology is becoming more affordable and even a cheaper model with lower image quality should be up to the task. The heat signature of a rat is impossible to miss when viewed through a thermal spotter – I tend to use mine on the lowest possible magnification to achieve a really wide field of view.

HANDY EXTRAS

A headlamp is a really useful accessory for rat shooting. Apart from enabling you to walk safely around the farm after nightfall, it will also provide handy illumination for jobs like reloading magazines and picking up shot rats.

Shooting sticks and tripods are another really handy extra. Infrared night-vision and thermal optics can be quite heavy – a set of sticks will support your combo and provide vital stability »



A headlamp provides a very handy light source for tasks like reloading magazines.

Mat usually adopts a static approach and ambushes emerging rats from the cover of darkness.

for pin-point pellet placement.

One of my favourite ratting accessories is a backpack stool. This handy bit of gear means that I always have essential kit items to hand, plus somewhere comfortable to sit and shoot from.

THE SHOOT

If I have the time, I like to arrive well before nightfall, so I can have a good look around the farm. This enables me to earmark any hazards, locate the places where the rats are most active and the spots from which I can safely target them.

During my recce, I will be looking out for rat droppings, burrows and any well-worn runs, because these clues reveal the places where the rodents are most active. Although you can shoot plenty of rats by wandering around the farm after dark, I tend to get better results by finding the most promising spots and settling in to target them one at a time.

Once I have decided on an area with a safe backstop, I then set up my stool and shooting sticks between 15 and 20 metres from where I expect the bulk of the action to take place. This means I will be taking supported shots over a known distance, which makes accurate shooting a lot easier. If you don't have a laser rangefinder, you can always pace out the distance between the ratty activity and the spot you intend to shoot from.

Sometimes rats are sufficiently confident to emerge and settle long enough to offer you shots, but there are times when you need to offer them some bait to keep them still. Pastes and fine particles work best because rats can't grab chunks and dart off with them. Liquidised cat food is one of my favourite offerings, but chocolate spread, peanut butter, breadcrumbs and coffee granules can also work well. A small heap placed in an open area along a busy run can be a brilliant way to get clear shots exactly where you want them.

Whether using bait or not, I tend to stay in my first chosen area until activity slows right down. At this point, I either pack up or, if time permits, move on and target another spot.

CLEARING UP

Ask the farmer where you should dispose of any rats you shoot because they probably won't be impressed if you leave corpses lying around. They will most likely tell you to dump them into a slurry pit or on a fire site.

Rats can carry some seriously nasty diseases, so never pick them up with your hands. You should be able to find a shovel and bucket on most farms, but there is no harm in taking your own. I keep a litter grabber in my boot, so I always have a hands-free means of gathering up dead rats. It is also a good idea to keep hand sanitiser and wet wipes in your car or kit bag. That way, you can clean your hands at the end of the session and eliminate the risk of transferring harmful bacteria onto everything you touch.

Peak ratting season can be a really exciting time for airgunners. I hope some of these tips will help to make it even more productive for you. ✕

A litter picker will keep your hands away from disease-carrying rats when it's time to clear up.

A decent tally of rats shot from a single area after locating a productive spot.

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PELLET MUNCHER!

GARY WAIN asks the question "Is the Daystate Delta Wolf a picky eater?"

This month's article might look like a pellet test, but I assure you it isn't. Well it is, sort of, but actually it's not. If you read last month's missive, you'll know that I am now in possession of a pair of Daystate Delta Wolfs. They aren't of mine forever, of course, but have been kindly loaned to me by Daystate's very own Tony Belas, to further my ballistic testing work here at Airgun World

At the end of last month's article, I said that I needed to look more closely at these guns, and the first thing I need to determine is if they're picky eaters; some airguns can be very fussy about the brand of pellets used, perhaps performing brilliantly with a specific pellet, but less than good, or even terrible with others. I need to know this from the outset because as part of my testing, I pretty much always assess the consistency of accuracy of the pellets. If in conducting this month's testing, I find that the pair of Delta Wolfs are particularly picky about their preferred pellets, then wonderful though these guns are, they will have to be returned to Daystate because they will be of no use to me for assessing the uniformity of accuracy of the pellets I choose to put through them.

In the same way that we know some airguns are picky eaters, we also know that some pellets fail to measure up in regard to accuracy, whichever gun they are fired from. With this in mind, what I'm trying to do might seem pretty difficult. I mean, how would you know whether the pellets being tested are inherently accurately in themselves? Fortunately, many years of ballistic testing has helped me to separate the wheat from the chaff, so I have a pretty good idea which pellets I think should perform well, and those that might be found lacking. So, if a pellet that I know has demonstrated consistent accuracy in the past fails to perform in the Delta Wolf, it will give me a pretty good idea that I might have a picky eater on my hands.

TESTING

As in previous testing, I chose to shoot at approximately 25m. Although it might appear that I'm testing the pellets for accuracy, what I'm really doing is testing

each of the rifles for their ability, or lack thereof, to shoot a wide range of pellets with consistent results.

So, although I'm not actually testing the pellets as such, I have still taken the opportunity to list them so that you can see for yourselves.

The first three tests used the same pellet in both .177 and .22, with the last two pellets brands in each calibre being relatively unknown.

.22 test pellets:

JSB Exact	15.89gr
Sovereign Rangemaster	15.9gr
Air Arms Field	16gr
JTS Dead Center	18.1gr
Remington Tyrant Hammer	15.3gr

.177 Test pellets

JSB Exact	8.44gr
Sovereign Rangemaster	8.4gr
Air Arms Field	8.4gr
QYS Domed	8.48gr
H&N FTT	8.44gr

MAKING SENSE OF THE NUMBERS

Unlike the high-power and FAC versions of the Delta Wolf, where the pellet weight can be dialled into the on-board, touch-screen computer, the 12 ft.lbs. version has fixed pellet weights for each calibre. You might not be surprised to learn that these weights are chosen by Daystate to match those of the .177 Rangemaster Sovereign at 8.44gr, and the .22 Sovereign at 15.9gr. Although on the surface this might seem a little limiting and selfish of Daystate, in actual fact, those weights are indicative of the average weights at those calibres, and besides that, Daystate are hardly likely to set up their chronographs and advertise that they've set the weight to that of a rival manufacturer's best seller, are they!

ACCURACY RESULTS FOR .22

If we look at the accuracy results for the .22 pellets we can see that most are abound the 6mm mark, with only the Remington Tyrant Hammer, which grouped at 15.3mm. I chose to include this pellet because I tested it many years ago when looking at Remington pellets as a whole, and found it not to be as »

RESULTS FOR .22

Pellet	Weight	Group Size	Average Velocity
JSB Exact	15.89gr	7mm	565fps
Sovereign Rangemaster	15.9gr	5.7mm	566 ps
Air Arms Field	16gr	5.8mm	570fps
JTS Dead Center	18.1gr	6.1mm	498fps
Remington Tyrant Hammer	15.3gr	15.1mm	594fps

RESULTS FOR .177

Pellet	Weight	Group Size	Average Velocity
JSB Exact	8.44gr	9mm	786fps
Sovereign Rangemaster	8.4gr	11mm	795fps
Air Arms Field	8.4gr	5.9mm	794fps
QYS Domed	8.48gr	6mm	770fps
H&N FTT	8.44gr	8.1mm	782fps

accurate as most domed pellets. Suffice to say that this inaccuracy has also been highlighted by the Delta Wolf. Perhaps the worst pellet I have ever tested is the Remington Tyrant Shock, and I couldn't resist the urge to put some through the Delta Wolf. The results were, as you might imagine, 'shocking' with a group of some 70mm proving that even the very best of airguns can't make a bad pellet shoot well.

MIXED RESULTS IN .177

Moving to .177, the results are bit more mixed, with Daystate's own Rangemaster proving not to group so well. If we are to assume that the Delta Wolf is not a picky eater, it might well be the case that the Rangemaster pellet just isn't as consistently well made as some of the others in the test.

I've added figures for velocity, which also shows a high degree of consistency across the board, with very little deviation on each side of the stated figure. What I haven't done is talk much about the Huma Regulator which has enabled this high degree of consistency. For those who are not entirely sure, an airgun regulator is simply a device that enables regulation of the air pressure within the outlet valve. It does this to help stabilise muzzle energy, and thereby consistency between shots. It is not intended to make it possible to raise the muzzle energy, but to keep the muzzle energy to the power level at which the airgun has been set. Although the Huma regulator within the Delta Wolf can be adjusted, it is not recommended that this be done because doing so could see energies exceeding the legal limit.

The selected .22 pellets.

CONCLUSION

Before concluding, I should add that I didn't limit my assessment to the pellets mentioned. In fact, I did put many brands through their paces, the results conforming to those demonstrated in the test selection.

I think it's safe to say that the Daystate Delta Wolf is not a picky eater in the slightest, so having determined that these guns aren't fussy, we can reasonably assume that the consistency of accuracy, or lack thereof, of any future pellets tested can be put down to the quality and inherent ballistic characteristics of the pellets themselves. ✕

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UMAREX EXPLORATION

MARK CAMOCCIO investigates the Browning Buck Mark URX pistol from Umarex

A few years back, I was lucky to get invited to see the huge Umarex factory over in Germany, and one thing that stuck in my mind was the attention to detail, and care taken at every stage of production. As a lifelong airgun fan, it was an exciting experience, but it was and remains a real eye-opener.

LICENCE

Umarex is a big name in the industry, and as the world's largest manufacturer of replicas, and reproduction airguns, its reputation in this niche sector is second to none. A multitude of models from famous brands such as Beretta, Browning, Colt, and Smith & Wesson, are produced under licence, and one look at their impressive catalogue shows just what they're all about. Many, probably most, are CO2-powered, and that allows the designers more of a free rein, free from the cumbersome, often heavy spring-piston guts of a traditional airgun.

SURPRISING

On test here is a gun which really does belie its neat profile – the Browning Buck »

Detail of the adjustable rear sight leaf.

The open sights work well.

See the Picatinny rails and rear sight assembly.

Mark URX – and I say that because this sleek pistol is actually a break-barrel, spring-powered pistol. So neat is the mechanism held within, that it's hard to take in initially. Obviously, air pistol power is often fairly low, so the swept volume of air doesn't need to be that great. Nonetheless, it really is a clever piece of design work, that holds much appeal.

BUILD QUALITY

Given that the RRP is around the £90 mark, this pistol has to be seen as inexpensive, so our expectations should be tailored accordingly. That said, Umarex's usual attention to detail and build quality are here, for sure. This model also happens to be a faithful reproduction of the .22 semi-auto-live version, and tipping the scales at a healthy yet manageable 1.5lbs, it feels both solid and well balanced. Picking it up for the first time reveals that those contoured black grips are actually soft-touch material, which always enhances feel and handling. Look to the heel of the composite grip, on each side, and the famous Browning insignia is there. All metal construction and the smart matte-black finish throughout are additional elements that just enhance that authentic feel overall.

MECHANICS

Look closely on the underside of the barrel and you'll notice the neat, articulated cocking linkage – the main visual indicator that this pistol is not quite what it appears to be. Cocking the action requires only minimal effort, and that's good, given that the fore sight appears to be slightly in the way of where the lead hand would be.

"fairlylow, so the swept volume of air doesn't need to be that great. Nonetheless, it really is a clever piece of design work, that holds much appeal"

Actually, I found the hand could grip the barrel just before the fore sight, still giving enough leverage, and it all worked well.

With the action cocked and breech exposed, just drop/push flush a pellet directly into the barrel, and lock up the barrel against the sprung detent. Given the slight chamfer in the breech, pellets aren't overly tight, so it can be good practice to point the barrel slightly down when closing the breech, just preventing any slack-fitting pellet from falling out. It's also worth a safety warning at this point – be careful not to have the barrel anywhere near the palm of the hand once the barrel is locked back up. Standard safe handling, but worth reiterating.

HANDLING AND FEEL

So, to the range, and this Browning is a pleasure to handle, courtesy of those comfort grips, and the super-long sight picture afforded by the dimensions has to be seen as a bonus. One minor mark down, points wise, is the fact that the rather basic rear sight requires a screwdriver to adjust for windage and elevation. That said, once adjusted, they may well be left alone for some while in any case, so it's not a major problem. It should also be noted that the windage screw moves in the opposite direction to that expected. Once this is anticipated, adjustment is easy, and again, once set, it's done.

I shot using open sights throughout, but obviously that extensive run of Picatinny rails up top is there if you do feel the urge for more elaborate sighting systems. Just

The breech is a subtle piece of design.

Soft-touch grips with the famous Browning insignia.

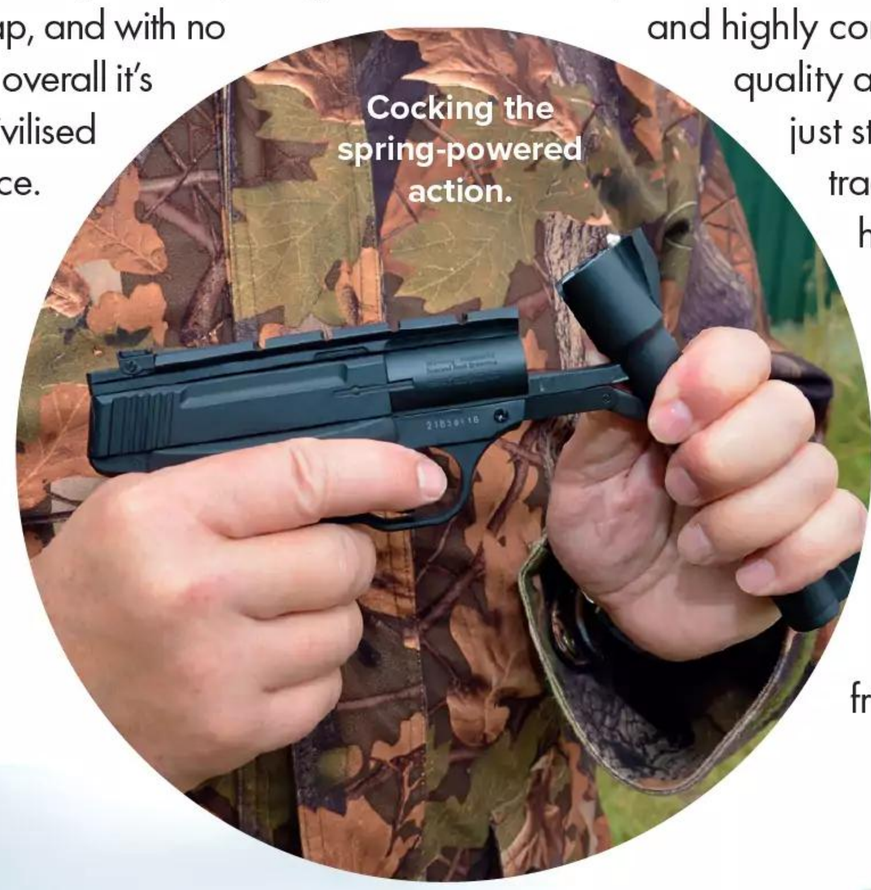
Everything feels well made.

bear in mind two things though; firstly, this model is a fun-first pistol, and the open sights do a good job; and secondly, just make sure that whatever sight you fit is positioned so that it doesn't foul the opening breech assembly as it moves through its arc of travel.

RANGE REPORT

Lots of positives with this pistol, but perhaps the weakest detail is the trigger, being rather stiff and non-adjustable. Think about the RRP, though – this is an obvious area of saving at the production stage. However, all is not lost, since the trigger blade itself is flat-surfaced and well-shaped. As for the firing cycle, it's extremely smooth, being more of a mild snap, and with no spring resonance, overall it's a very pleasant, civilised shooting experience.

As previously mentioned, air pistols are normally low-powered affairs, and this Browning registered average energy figures around 1.8 ft.lbs. As for consistency, 10-shot strings with a total spread of just 8fps are just what the doctor ordered, achieved using Top Shot wadcutter pellets on test. In terms of accuracy, groups of around 1.25 inches over 10 yards, shooting with open sights, gives an idea of what this pistol is capable of, and I really enjoyed my time with the Browning over the test period.


Cocking the spring-powered action.

CONCLUSION

All things considered, the Browning Buck Mark URX delivers on its remit – namely to offer reliable fun performance, in a satisfying format. Umarex really is master of the art, and here it's the clever design and highly competent build quality and finish that just stops you in your tracks, wondering how it's done for the asking price. I reckon this is a real bargain, and for back garden fun and casual competition with friends, it's hard to beat.

Thanks to Range & Country Shooting Supplies in Sleaford, Lincs., for the kind loan of this pistol. Range & Country can be found at www.rangeandcountry.co.uk ✕

TECH SPEC

Model: Browning Buck Mark URX
Manufacturer: Umarex, Germany
Type: Spring-powered
Calibre: .177 only
Weight: 1.5lbs
Overall Length: 12"
Barrel Length: 5.4"
Grips: Soft-touch rubber
Trigger: Single-stage, non-adjustable
Velocity: Using Top Shot Diabolo pellets
10-shot string:

High	318fps
Low	310fps
Ave	315fps
Spread	8fps

Energy: 1.8 ft.lbs. on test
Contact: John Rothery (Wholesale) www.bisley-uk.com

PRICE: Guide £89

ANCIENT AIR!

JAMIE CHANDLER grabs his Venom-tuned HW77 and wastes no time in putting it to work on a squirrel permission

I was busy outside in the garden, sunning myself and helpfully showing my wife where she'd missed with the weeding the other day, when an older lady from the village turned up with a black bin liner asking for my help. Her husband, a pub and party stalwart, raconteur of shooting-related stories and general fun guy to be near, had sadly died a year or so ago, and in her bin liner she had brought his BSA Airsporter Mk. 2 – one of the two best-looking spring air rifles ever made, in my opinion, the other being the AA Prosport.

The gentleman in question had told me many stories of shooting exploits with his old pair of John Dickson shotguns, but never once mentioned that he had an airgun. It transpired that after his passing, none of his children wanted the shotguns, so off they went to auction, but the family didn't want to part with the Airsporter because they wanted to plink in the garden with it and have a pop at the odd squirrel or rabbit, as he had done with them growing up.

His widow had come round to ask me if there was anything that could be done to bring this circa 60-year-old, stunning rifle up to power, and to make it more user-friendly. The grandchildren had apparently found it hard to open the stiff tap loader and use the scope. I didn't want to ask how old they were for fear of the answer, but to be honest, apart from a very obvious twang on firing. it seemed fine to me. Perhaps a better test of its health would be a check over a chrono', but sadly that would have to wait.

I searched for over half an hour for the disappeared squizzer.

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCE

So, as much as I love the form of the Airsporter, with no under-lever on show, do I think it could ever be a match for my 1986 HW77, HW97, or even TX200? Well, no, utterly not. The leaps forward in spring-powered airgun design between 1963 and today are similar to that of the internal combustion engine between a 1965 Ford Anglia and 2022 Fiesta, principally the same – but not. There's no two-stage trigger, let alone the buttery Rekord or CD units; the Airsporter's internals are nowhere near as well made, or with such quality materials as the other three, either. I would love to see if I could get it up to what I consider a modern hunting spec, but it's not mine and the trigger has such a long travel before let off that I can't actually fire the rifle without it being on a rest, so even trying for rats at 12 yards would be irresponsible.

This beauty did spark a nostalgia-fest in my mind, though, bringing happy memories shooting as a 12-year-old on what I guess would now be a rough HFT-style course, set out by my dad round the garden, with my open-sighted BSA Meteor.

HEAVY, LOUD AND LONG?

This rose-tinted love-in of my youth then coerced me in to grabbing my 1986 Venom-tuned HW77 to go hunting. As I've mentioned a few times, this gift from a friend's father was the reason I took up spring-powered airgun hunting so avidly again in my 20s. I know the critics among you have yelled, 'It's heavy, and long, and loud', in the past, but I love the steadiness that the weight offers on aim, the report is really nothing, and the length adds a solid platform. The only teeny-weeny downside is, it's in .177, so there's a bit of prolonged fiddling around to grab a pellet, which is why I never put pellets in a trouser pocket. The view it might give to the unaware could be, well, literally arresting. A quick refresher with the '77's firing cycle, and the trajectory of the .177 pellet, saw me comfortably stretching its legs out to 45 yards at the range, with a blistering 55-yard seated shot on a spent cartridge to finish! I was ready for the off, hunting for squirrels.

I'M GOING IN!

This great 'retro rifle hunt', happened to coincide with the end of the hottest September week on record. I woke up at 5am to be in the wood for 6.30, and was amazed by the autumnal freshness that had flopped down suddenly that morning, like a short-tempered, well-built aunt on the sofa after Christmas dinner. Luckily, my car is a sty of abandoned clothes, and a musty gilet was close at hand with a bonus face mask, which I donned. The air was chilly but the sky clear, and I could »

"Obviously, a pigeon wouldn't be disappointing to bag, but successfully stalking squirrels is a hard-won, small-bag affair,, and I'm a tragic addict"

Final tally, 2.5 because one wasn't found!

hear the bark of angry tree-wreckers proclaiming their rights to various territories in front of me, so I loaded up and with an optimistic amount of pellets in my pocket I headed in. The leaf litter crunched like delicious, crispy bacon, reminding me that I hadn't had breakfast, but steeling my hunting instincts , I hoped to bag a meal.

I know I talk a lot about squirrel stalking through woodland, but for me, it's the pinnacle of UK non-FAC airgun sport. The fluffy-tailed egg swipers could be anywhere in front, behind, above or below me, I have no idea. Under the shade of a hefty late summer canopy, there's even more of a challenge to get a glimpse of the crafty nut-crackers, let alone the rifle up to one. I could stack the odds in my favour more by deploying a thermal or feeder, and would if this was pest control and nothing else, but it's not. It's hunting in its purest form, just me, the woods and the squirrels. Obviously, a pigeon wouldn't be disappointing to bag, but successfully stalking squirrels is a hard-won, small-bag affair, and I'm a tragic addict.

CLEAN DISPATCH

After 45 minutes of chasing twitches in trees, rustles and the very occasional glimpse of a disappearing tail, I finally had my first opportunity. I followed the little nut-gnawer down a trunk, lost it behind the tree, then caught up with it as the head and shoulders appeared again, frozen, looking for me.

Slowly, I dropped to a knee and let an Air Arms Field 4.52 loose. There was the muzzle report, followed by an almost immediate impact crack. I watched as the squirrel dropped, and it was dispatched cleanly, I knew it. I reloaded quickly and moved forward the necessary 15 yards or so, and there was not a squirrel to be found. I spent half an hour trying to get deeper into the heavily brambled undergrowth to look further, but finally admitted defeat and walked on. Experience told me it had been a clean dispatch, and squirrels have kicked themselves under leaf cover after a clean head shot, but it still made me feel awkward.

DOZED OFF? OF COURSE NOT!

I would have quit there and then, had it not been the only time I'd be allowed out that week so I continued and came to a clear-floored, pine plantation. I decided to sit up against a trunk and wait to see if I could get a pin-point on any calling, or other signs. The important thing to understand is I didn't fall into a doze. I might have decided to shut down tactically for half an hour, but it wasn't dozing. Dozing is for old men or cold winter, fireside evenings. At worst, this was a tactical recharge, like when your phone screen goes blank whilst telling you it's charging, but one swipe and it's immediately up again – it was definitely not a doze.

I swiped immediately out of my 'low battery use' mode to the sound of rustling. As I wasn't dozing, I didn't need to open my eyes, but perhaps chose to as the rustling got closer in fits and starts. Then a very busy squirrel going about its burying business popped into view. Slowly, I raised the rifle on the woodland invader and with a clear shot as it came to rest at 25 yards, I fired. This time, after the twitching ceased, I could easily see the squirrel on the floor, so I moved forward and bagged my prize, delighted to have something to show for my morning. By now it was getting warm, even in the shade. I'd almost lost myself in pure immersion for nearly four hours and wanted to check for crows around the cattle troughs, so started back to the car.

AMAZING START!

As I got within 20 yards of the car, a 'not so bright' tree rat dashed down a trunk and along the floor. I dropped, squeaked and followed with the HW 77 until it froze to see where the squeak was coming from. I didn't need a better cue and took my shot, again a clean drop and an easy retrieve. I had to talk myself into not staying.

I went and watched the cattle feeders for 30 minutes and was surprised how much movement there was from potential quarry, although I couldn't figure a safe angle of fire. After the third missed call in 45 minutes, I figured I should leave and do something financially more rewarding. What an amazing start to the autumn! ✕

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THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

DAVE BARHAM reveals the rather versatile CO2-powered Trophy MkII Pistol combos from AirForceOne

When is a pistol not a pistol? When it comes supplied with a bolt-on stock! If you haven't seen them already, the latest offering from the guys at The Shooting Party are going to be of interest to anyone who enjoys a bit of back garden plinking.

I'm just going to outline what these combo kits are all about this month, and revisit them with a thorough testing in the next issue, because from my first impressions they really do deserve more than two pages.

TWO COMBOS

There are two different versions of the Trophy MkII available, those being the standard Black Synthetic version and a rather snazzy 'Nero Rosa SE' Black/Red Synthetic. The massive difference between the original MkI and this latest incarnation is the removable stock that instantly changes the pistol into a little rifle.

There are two different calibres available for both options, too; the .177 'Target' and .22 'Vermin' versions. Whilst these pistols really do pack a punch at a tad under 5.5 ft.lbs., we here at Airgun World don't advocate using pistols for actively hunting, but they are more than capable for humane dispatch at point blank range.

A COMPLETE KIT

Inside the box you'll find the pistol, the rifle stock, a Get Shorty silencer, two self-indexing magazines (9-shot .177 and 7-shot .22), a single-shot tray and a very comprehensive instruction manual.

The MKII pistol features a very

There's a pistol cleverly hidden underneath all the external add-ons!

comfortable, competition-style-grip, which incorporates a generous palm shelf at the base to aid grip and control. There's also a Picatinny rail moulded into the underneath at the front of the pistol to house a bipod for when you add the stock.

Adding the stock couldn't be easier, you simply remove the plugs situated at the top and bottom of the pistol and them push the stock into the gaps provided, and they click into place. There's even a small lever moulded into the base of the stock to make removing the stock and transforming it back into a pistol much easier. They really have thought of everything.

CO2 POWER

These pistols operate from a single 12g CO2 bulb, which is easily inserted into the reservoir immediately below the barrel. A single CO2 bulb gives around 45-55 full power shots, depending on the ambient air temperature you are shooting in.

Speaking of the barrel, this is free-floating on both models, providing better barrel harmonics and in turn, greater accuracy. You'll also be pleased to know that the barrel is rifled, too.

The classic bolt-action and wide breech makes loading the magazine a doddle, and there is a fixed front-post sight coupled with an adjustable rear sight that allows for windage and elevation adjustments to be made. Heading down to the trigger, it is gently curved and can be adjusted for pull pressure between 8oz and a whopping 4lbs! The release point is crisp, easy to judge and there is no creep at all.

I'll be delving much deeper in the next issue, as well as showing you my on-range accuracy results.

VERY RESONABLE

If you fancy laying your hands on the Black Synthetic Combo, that will set you back a mere £189.99, with the Nero Rosa SE Combo costing £209.99. ✖

INFO

If you can't wait until next month for all the nitty gritty Tech Specs, visit: www.shootingparty.uk

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ZERO TO HERO!

MATTHEW GLEAVES reveals what it took to make it from his garden shed to British National Champion in 2023

I honestly never in a million years thought I'd be the British National Air Rifle Benchrest Champion when I took up the sport seriously three and a half years ago, and I have yet to come down off the ceiling, a week after my double victory at the Benchrest UK Nationals. I won the Heavy Air Rifle class, but more importantly, I won the aggregate competition for the combined scores of Heavy and Light Air Rifle, and this in turn, made me the Benchrest UK, British National Champion for Air Rifle.

THE JOURNEY

My dad introduced me to airguns, and without him, none of this would have happened. After he passed away in 1995, I found myself with a renewed fondness for the sport, but I didn't know where it would lead. My daughter shot 10m pistol and was on the British Talent Squad and Dad would have loved to have known her. He would also have loved having his picture in Airgun World – we used to fight over who read it first in the 1980s. We knew every article and advert – thanks Dad.

The path to victory started during Covid. I had just purchased my first Anschutz 9015 and was thinking about getting into benchrest. The new rifle arrived a few months into the first

THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Day 1: Friday, 1st September – Practice Day

I arrived from the hard north having travelled a much shorter distance than normal. The car was full with two cased rifles, wheeled work box stacking system, camping chairs and other shooting-related paraphernalia. The Derby range is one of the nicest I've been to with great people and facilities. Nothing really special happened. I practised and acclimatised myself to the range, leaving myself feeling that I was in good stead for a competitive showing the next day. This was followed by my teatime pint. I'm not a drinker, but this has become kind of a good luck thing after I won my first event.

Day 2: Saturday 2nd September – Light Air Rifle Competition

Having won gold at all the benchrest events so far this year, I didn't want to jinx my winning streak by even thinking about what might happen. Although, I came 4th in the Light Rifle, it was the closest finish of the top four shooters I've seen – 1st and 4th place were separated by one point and a handful of Xs. Other shooters were asking if I was disappointed, and that was so far from how I was feeling! I shot the same as I always shoot, and I praised the other shooters who'd had a better day. I really believe tomorrow is another day and anything can happen if you try your best.

As an elite athlete (joking) I then retired to my bed about 8pm and had a great rest for the battle to come.

Day 3: Sunday 3rd September – Heavy Air Rifle Competition

I woke at 5am and started my preparations, relaxing and getting myself focused. I don't like to feel rushed when I compete, but my early mornings drive Mrs G crazy. After plenty of coffee and the appropriate dose of bacon protein, we headed to the range.

I am very lucky because my biggest gift is that I don't feel nerves when I compete, and I never feel stressed about the competition. There was very little wind on the Sunday and that was extremely predictable. My first card was a strong 248 in the best conditions I had that day.

I found myself two points behind the leaders because some 250s had already been shot in the first detail of the day. The wind became a little stronger but manageable, so I still scored high with a 247 in my next card, and some of those shooters who shot the 250 on their first card started to drop behind me. I just kept telling myself that consistency is what was needed, and went on to shoot a 247 in my last card out of 250. With scores of 248-247-247 this was my personal best in competition, but ... and there was a big 'but' – the European Champion had yet to shoot his last card and although I had placed in the medals, I didn't know where.

I thought second place would be a great achievement, considering the pedigree of the other shooters; Jerry is the guy to beat and he proved this with his recent European win, but when he put in a 244 on his last card, I knew I had won! One of the event officials came out to confirm the good news and told me that I was the Heavy Rifle and British National Champion. I was sitting with my friend, Edmund, when I got the good news, and he was a little shocked when I shrieked and let off a few involuntary fist pumps. After a smile that could irritate the Pope, and a few wheelies, I sat for a few minutes to let the whole thing sink in.

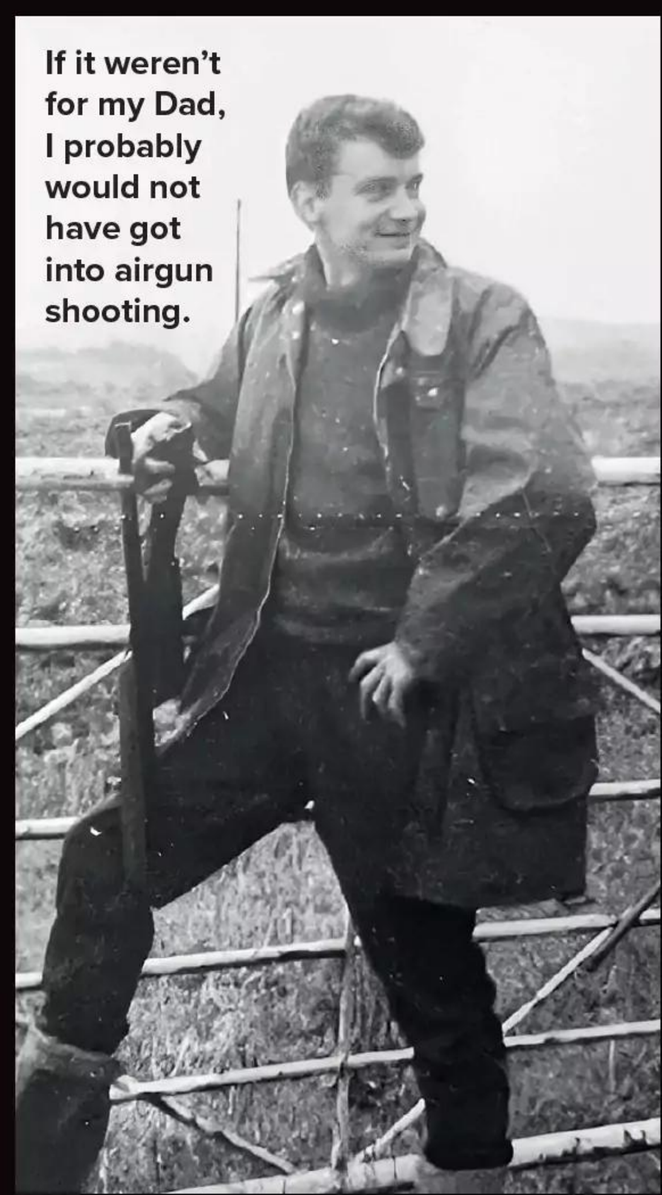
lockdown and I found myself with more free time than I had ever known in my life, so to keep my sanity, I went all out to learn the art of benchrest.

Off to the shed, I went, and as well as shooting, I delved into pellet preparation and understanding my rifle to the most minute detail. I'm an 'all in' kind of person and from that day to this, benchrest shooting became my obsession.

At this point, I also started my YouTube Channel and Facebook Group – AirAbility. This was a great outlet for me; AirAbility has helped other disabled people into the sport and supported the wider benchrest community with the knowledge I have gained along the way.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Any winner who says they did it alone is either very unlucky not to have had support, or doesn't understand that to get anywhere in shooting it takes a whole group of people and a smidgen of luck. Also, it's blooming hard work and 500-1000 pellets a week!



If it weren't for my Dad, I probably would not have got into airgun shooting.

If you watch my YouTube channel you will hear me talk about how Mrs G helps and supports me. We have a 'team Gleaves' mentality and among other things, Sharon is chief roadie, pit crew, flag arranger, article proof reader and bacon buttie ninja. Without her devotion to me and the sport, I wouldn't be writing this article.

It doesn't stop there! There is a whole list of people who have contributed to me learning how to shoot better, and supported my accomplishments, including an understanding employer, Benchrest UK, and the online communities we have. I also pay tribute to the people who customised my Anschutz 9015 with superb tuning by Simon Howarth, and the custom stock made by Tommy Bennett, making my »

gun truly fit an odd-shaped fella like me.

There is even more people than you think getting in on the game of supporting my endeavours with a grant from CSSC (a Civil Service Sporting Organisation) and pellets from H&N, my sponsor. I also have access to a wheelchair-compatible field in a secret location, where I practise. These supporters are only the tip of the iceberg and I am truly grateful to these people and organisations. I know that without them, I would struggle to meet my shooting goals.

PREPARATION

For me, the Benchrest Nationals started last winter in the shed, when I set up my rifle and equipment for the coming season. I prepare to the most infinite level of detail, and once locked into a set-up, that's it for the season, unless there is a catastrophic malfunction.

I run two Anschutz 9015s and both are ready to go in case I have a rifle failure at a competition – I can just do a mid-detail swap.

I was increasing my practice in the last two months before the event, and attended a friendly benchrest competition in Gloucester where I won Heavy, Light and Aggregate Air Rifle Events. Although my preparation was hampered by the weather and I didn't get nearly enough field practice that I wanted, I felt I was shooting as well as expected.

I did it! I actually did it!

BENCHREST UK DERBY NATIONALS 2023 Air Rifle Aggregate Results						
Shooter Name	AIR LV	X count	AIR HV	X count	Total	Total x
Matt Gleaves	734	19	742	32	1476	51
Jerry May	731	21	741	36	1472	57
Anthony Davey	730	31	741	36	1471	67
Graham Freeman	735	25	735	26	1470	51
Trevor Eling	734	23	735	23	1469	46
Mike Tucker	735	23	732	27	1467	50
Gordon Moore	730	22	732	20	1462	42
Phil Bate	723	21	736	27	1459	48
Jason Lockett	725	23	732	24	1457	47
Paul Crouch	720	16	733	36	1453	52
Justin Trickey	714	8	737	26	1451	34
Sonia Carr	718	17	728	17	1446	34
Martin Hubbard	722	12	724	18	1446	30
Tom Jacobs	721	14	724	22	1445	36
Tony Bailey	712	22	722	15	1434	37
Ian Price	717	14	714	15	1431	29
Colin Renwick	720	16	708	16	1428	32
Hayley Kenward	724	29	703	16	1427	45
Bill Taylor	713	18	714	15	1427	33
Keith Petrie	701	7	718	20	1419	27
Sophie Renwick	713	7	706	16	1419	23
Paul Metcalfe	697	10	714	20	1411	30
Dave Lillywhite	700	12	706	12	1406	24
Edmund Vickers	678	7	697	9	1375	16
Sue Morris	658	3	681	5	1339	8

The week before the event, I took annual leave from work and devoted the whole time to practice, checking my equipment and pellet preparation. I was then locked and loaded and ready to go.

PONDERING A GREAT DAY

That evening, I thought about my achievement of beating the current European Champion and former World Champions, as well as the whole of the GB Team who had just returned from the World Championships. By anybody's standards, that was a great day at the range!

As I went to bed that evening, Mrs G was less than impressed when I said, "Tonight you don't just sleep next to a champion – you sleep next to a British Champion!" ✕

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"I prepare to the most infinite level of detail, and once locked into a set-up, that's it for the season, unless there is a catastrophic malfunction"

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DON'T BE A SPRING CHICKEN

RICH SAUNDERS takes a look at some of the best spring-piston-powered air rifles to see if they are good enough for hunting

There's no denying the fact that modern pre-charged pneumatic air rifles are simply easier to shoot more accurately than spring-powered rifles. Thanks to their lack of recoil, PCPs will flatter to deceive and even the most inexperienced shot will be able to hit the target time after time. Spring-powered rifles, or 'springers', on the other hand are more of a challenge. The presence of a mainspring bouncing up and down the chamber, not to mention the other bits of associated hardware, requires technique and practice to tame, and yet, there's no reason why a springer won't be any less accurate than a PCP. After all, it's how many of you will have started out.

Unlike PCPs, springers also have the benefit of not needing a bottle, compressor or stirrup pump. Simply break the barrel, under-lever or sidelever to compress the mainspring and cock the action, pop in a pellet and away you go. No air leaks, regulators or electronics to worry about.The other benefit of a springer over a PCP is that, generally speaking, they are more affordable. However, the downside is that unlike most PCPs that are generally accurate at airgun hunting distances, there is more variation when it comes to springers. So, we thought that we'd take a look at a few springers across a range of prices and ask if they are good enough for hunting or pest control.

WEIHRAUCH HW95K DELUXE

£470 HULLCARTRIDGE.CO.UK

When it comes to springers, break-barrels in particular, it's hard to argue against Weihrauch dominating the scene. Many of its models have been in production for 50 years or more, and the fact that they are still going strong is testament to their quality.

Weight is not necessarily a bad thing on a springer because it helps to absorb any recoil, and several of Weihrauch's models are on the lardy size, weighing 10lbs or more with a scope. However, when it comes to hunting, many of us prefer something a little lighter, and that's why the HW95K deserves its reputation as one of the best sporting break-barrels. Weighing 3.4kg unscoped, its hardly a featherweight, but the elegant ambidextrous beech stock and superb design that balances in the middle of the fore end makes it seem lighter still.

The overall length is a leggy 1,040mm, but that includes a 190mm silencer that is screwed onto a 310mm barrel. The simple but somehow graceful stock features a solid brown shoulder pad with a black spacer. There are subtle cheek rests on each side and panels of chequering on both the steeply raked pistol grip and long fore end. Much has been written about the fabled two-stage and adjustable Rekord trigger unit that graces Weihrauch springers. The gold finish on our test Deluxe model might be a bit blingy for some, but there's no denying the pleasure involved in using it. The first stage graduates to a defined stop and the let-off breaks like the finest crystal glass. The silencer not only does a great job of reducing muzzle report, but also helps to make the HW95K extremely easy to break and cock. With the barrel returned, the lock-up is solid and there's a reassuringly large bolt in the breach, which you can nip up should you notice any sloppiness in time. A cross-bolt safety catch at the back of the action pops out each time the rifle is cocked. Some will moan about having to knock it off before each shot, but it does provide security in the event the action fires during loading, and it does at least mean you can de-cock the HW95K. Most good quality pellets worked well through our .22 test rifle and there was little to choose between JSB Exacts and Hades, as well as H&N FT and Baracuda 8. If anything, the Hades had the slightest of edges, printing 17mm and 29mm groups at 20 and 30 metres. Variance over 10 shots was 19fps with an average output of 10.68 ft.lbs.

BSA LIGHTNING XL SE

£375 BSAGUNS.CO.UK

There's no denying that the GRT versions of BSA's Lightning series are some of the finest gas-ram rifles available. For those who prefer, there's a spring-piston version, which like its rammer sibling, is a handsome beast. There are two models and the difference between the them is largely aesthetic. The Lightning SE is available only with an ambidextrous beech stock and has a volumetric silencer, whereas the Lightning XL SE offers; a black soft-touch option, a full-length silencer, different chequering pattern and a slightly enhanced, two-stage adjustable trigger.

Both benefit from a BSA cold-hammer-forged barrel that accounts for 370mm of the overall length, which on our Lightning XL SE model was 990mm. Unscoped, it weighs 3kg.

A high cheek comb gives good eye alignment to a scope mounted on the raised dovetail rail that also helps eliminate any possibility of the scope shifting under recoil. If you prefer, the raised mount can be removed to access the 13mm dovetail rail below. The ventilated butt pad not only looks good, but also makes the rifle comfortable to shoulder and helps to absorb the light recoil.

Enhanced by subtle yet grippy chequering, the pistol grip swells nicely in the hand and gives good access to the trigger, with the length of pull measuring around 350mm. The two-stage trigger is buttery smooth with an obvious transition between the two stages. On our test rifle, the first stage was light, and the travel on the second stage quite long. Both are adjustable.

Located above and right of the trigger, the safety catch is a simple lever, and the rifle is live with it in the forward position. Although the catch is not engaged when the Lightning XL SE is cocked, an anti-bear trap will help prevent any trapped finger accidents. The downside is that the rifle cannot be de-cocked.

The barrel brakes with a light tap on the end of the muzzle and the cocking stroke is silky smooth. Lock up at the breech on the return stroke is reassuringly solid and so is the firing cycle that is devoid of any twang and instead has the kind of 'thuddy' release associated with tuned springers.

Our .177 test rifle returned an average of 695 feet per second over 10 shots, equating to 11.24 ft.lbs., with a variance of only 23fps. As you'd expect, that cold-hammer-forged barrel wasn't pellet fussy, but perhaps unsurprisingly, showed a preference for BSA 10.49 grain BSA Blackstar pellets with groups of 19 and 31mm at 20 and 30 metres, respectively.

AIR ARMS PRO SPORT

£839.99 JUSTAIRGUNS.CO.UK

There is more to the Pro Sport than oodles of aesthetic appeal alone, and it has quite rightly earned a reputation as one of the finest-looking and performing spring-piston rifles ever made. Available either with a beech stock, like our test rifle, or an even more delicious walnut handle, the Pro Sport measures 1,030mm long and weighs between 4.1 and 4.3kg.

There are dedicated left- and right-handed versions, as well as high-power FAC options delivering 14 and 17 ft.lbs. in .177 and .22 calibres, respectively.

A ventilated rubber shoulder pad finished with a black spacer helps to soak up what little recoil there is, and thanks to a high comb and pronounced cheek rest, shoulder fit and scope to eye alignment is spot on.

Adorned with panels of chequering that are ornate but not fussy, the raked angle of the pistol grip accentuates the rifle's lines and is finished with a rosewood cap. There's more chequering on each side of the fore end, along with a couple of dimples right at the very end.

Tucked away underneath and running almost the entire length of the fore end is the aluminium under-lever. There are no catches or buttons to release, and the lever is held in place, rattle-free, by the mechanism. Pulling it down sets a resettable safety catch at the rear of the action that works in conjunction with an anti-bear trap to prevent the lever flying up and trapping your fingers. The cocking stroke also slides open the loading port on top of the action so a pellet can be inserted directly into the breech. Like many under-levers, the process can be a little fiddly to begin with, but the port is large enough, and should you drop a pellet when loading, it will fall straight through.

The gold two-stage and fully adjustable trigger has a comfortably curved blade with a 360mm length of pull. Straight out of the box, the set-up on our test rifle was perfect with a nicely weighted first stage and defined transition to the second-stage let-off.

Unlike many springers, even expensive ones, the report from the Pro Sport lacks any twang and instead sends pellets on their way with a muted thud. Part of that is no doubt down to the quality of engineering that uses synthetic bearings, and a shrouded Lothar Walther barrel that has an in-built moderator.

On the range, our test .22 calibre Pro Sport had a preference for Air Arms Diabolo Field and JSB Exact pellets. The former printed one-hole, 18mm groups at 20 metres, which opened up only slightly to 28mm at 30 metres. Variance over 10 shots was 19fps with an average power output of 11.6 ft.lbs.

KRAL DEVIL ARBOREAL

£195 RANGE-RIGHT.CO.UK

If you're in the market for a sporting spring rifle, many will turn to the big, well-known brands whose products not only dominate the space, but also often command a premium price. There is another way, though, with rifles such as the Kral Devil Arboreal, which comes as a package with a 3-9 x 32 Konus scope, mounts, a rifle bag and pellets.

There are lots of variants with stock options including, walnut, camo, and the high-quality wood-effect plastic on our Arboreal test rifle with prices that vary, but all qualify as affordable. This is a handsome devil, and at 1,140mm to the tip of the ornate cocking aid on the end of the barrel, it is full-size, but light at just 2.9kg, thanks largely to the slim, plastic ambidextrous stock.

A perforated rubber shoulder pad is set off by a black spacer. Large, moulded chequering panels adorn each side of the pistol grip that will accommodate both a thumb up and thumb around grip. The fore end sports two raised black panels that aid grip.

At this price point, it's hardly surprising that the trigger, which comprises a folded metal blade, is a little agricultural. There are two stages, but the release is notchy and there is no obvious means of adjustment, at least externally. However, the manual safety catch located forward of the blade locks everything up securely, and an anti-bear trap is a welcome safety feature even if it does prevent de-cocking the rifle.

Although the Kral Devil Arboreal comes with a set of open sights – a green notch at the back that's adjustable for windage and elevation, and a red fibre-optic at the front – most will make use of the included Konus scope.

It wouldn't be fair to compare the Kral Devil Arboreal directly to the other much more expensive models in our line-up. However, on the range using JSB Hades pellets, our .22 test rifle served up a very respectable 11.71 ft.lbs. with a 10-shot variance of 21fps. At 20 metres, the Kral Devil was commendably accurate, too, registering groups of 37mm suggesting that despite its modest price point, it would be more than capable short-range rat and squirrel hunting.

A SPRING IN YOUR STEP

With characteristics that flatter the abilities of most shooters, it's hard to argue against the use of PCPs when it comes to hunting and pest control, but for some they lack a little soul and, dare I say it, make things a little easy. On the other hand, a decent springer offers more of a challenge, not least to tame the recoil generated by a mainspring, and demands you learn proper shooting technique, but once mastered, and that's part of the appeal after all, a decent springer can be as effective as any PCP at normal airgun hunting ranges.

If you are of the PCP generation, you owe it to yourself to take on the challenge of a springer, and if you used one in your youth, it's perhaps time you reacquainted yourself with the type of rifle that started it all off.

TEL' THE TEACHER

What do you do if standing shots are no longer viable? ***TERRY DOE*** has the answer

Keen hunter, Matt Crane, is facing a major challenge to his field shooting. He explains:

Dear Airgun World,
'Since developing a frozen shoulder, my standing shooting has, quite frankly, gone to pot, to the extent that I no longer feel confident in taking standing shots at live quarry. I've tried to train my way out of this situation, but it's just not working. In fact, the more I train, the worse it gets, and my physiotherapist has strongly advised me to stop trying to force my shoulder into compliance. I'm waiting for a set of shooting sticks to arrive, so I'll have some support, but if they don't help me, I'm sure I'll have to discount standing shots entirely.

I'm now concerned about how this will affect my hunting, and I'd be extremely grateful for any advice.'

Regards,
MATT CRANE

CHANGE FOR GOOD

Well, Matt, let's begin with the good news; your hunting will remain perfectly productive and enjoyable, if you never take another unsupported standing shot. In fact, I'd say the changes you need to make will make your sport better than it ever was. Let's begin by looking at those changes, and seeing how they apply to you.

First, please realise that you're offloading the least stable shooting stance of them all. These days, I only use an unsupported standing stance when there's no other option, and of course if I don't feel totally confident, I don't take the shot. I use shooting sticks when being mobile is the going method, and I'd advise you to give them a proper chance to improve your standing shots.

IN A BETTER POSITION

If the sticks don't work, or even if they do, don't worry! Switch your training to developing your kneeling, prone and sitting stances, including how to transition smoothly into these from the standing position. If you're using a roving or stalking approach, you'll be spotting your quarry from an upright position, so being able to assume your best shooting stance smoothly and quietly will really help.

Personally, I use the sitting stance whenever I can, but you may prefer the stability of the bipod-supported prone position. Low vegetation can make prone shots impossible, though, so having all three stances in your armoury is always the best system.

STILL DEVELOPING

Finally, do your best to exploit the 'static hunting' potential of your shoot by defining the hotspots for quarry, and setting up ambush points. These don't need to be full-on hides, either, although hide-hunting is one of the most productive methods of them all – see Barry Hearn's masterclass in last month's magazine – because any concealed position can work for you. I've had great success simply wearing camouflage gear, including a hat, gloves and mask, and sitting at the base of a tree, or among vegetation. Provided you've selected your spot well, and you keep all movements to a minimum, you'll be amazed at what can be achieved. The best way to use static hunting, is to develop a series of locations, including hides, and use them as your quarry's food sources make them more productive. Sitty trees, roosting sites, water sources, and rabbit warrens can all offer great sport at the right time, so study your shoot, and let the quarry tell you when to be there.

Good luck, Matt, and I think you'll find offloading unsupported standing shots may well turn out to be a blessing in disguise! ✕

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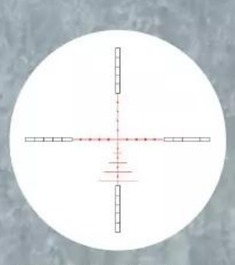

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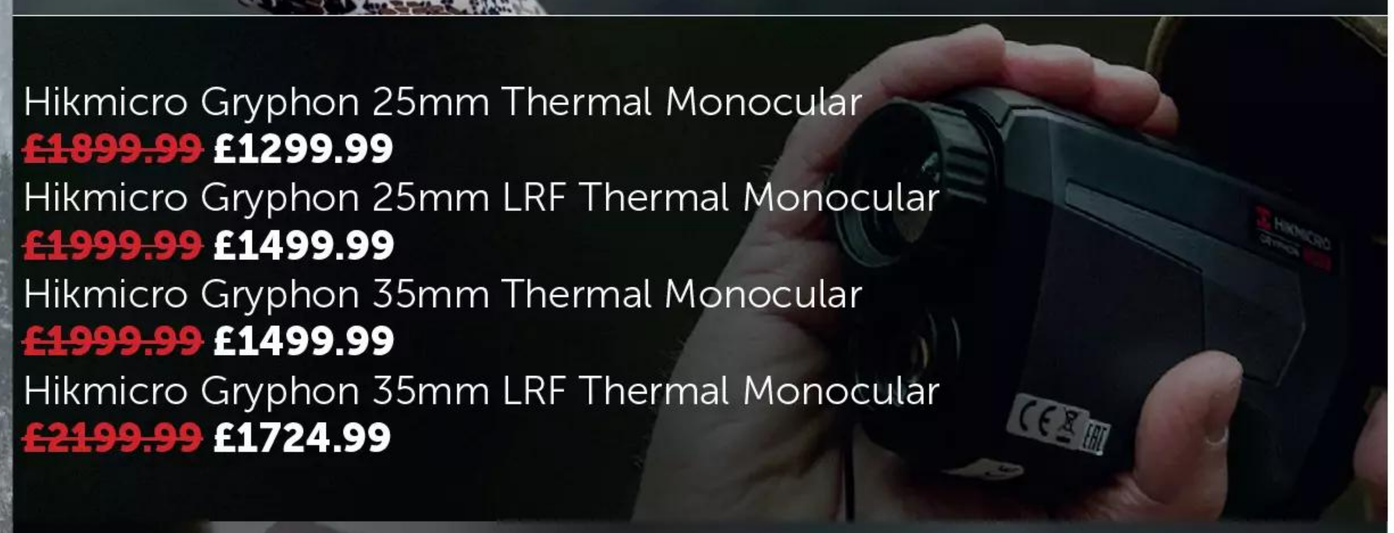

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MINIATURE MARVEL

RUSS DOUGLAS receives a brand-new compact/lightweight day and night scope for exclusive and impartial review. He tests it by day and night – including for pest control – and comes away very impressed

This month, I had to postpone two almost complete reviews due to frustrating kit niggles, but then I was contacted by a new producer of digital day and night scopes, who offered me one to test/review, and as always I only accepted on condition that I was able to be 100% honest, presenting both pros and cons. After a few weeks, the scope just arrived – unusually, the courier's App hadn't registered that it was on its way.

My Krait is uber-compact and portable, feature-packed and adjusts to fit me. It's so light that I can even mount heavy optics without it becoming unduly heavy or cumbersome. I didn't expect to review a feature-packed day and night scope so compact that it suits the Krait to a tee.

HITTAC optics (China) was an unknown manufacturer to me, yet I'm

already impressed, not only with the first scope I've tried, but also the company's openness to ideas and accepting suggestions for improvement. I've had this scope in my eager paws for less than two weeks and it's already proving its worth. I was a bit gutted to dismount it yesterday to pass it to my buddy, and recognised UK NV guru, Bruce, to do his various measurements, but I already have enough footage recorded for five videos, so shouldn't be greedy. My review scope was so early off the production line that it didn't include a manual – they do now – but Bruce quickly found a PDF manual online.

DID I SAY COMPACT?

The scope's just 200mm long, including detachable, corrugated rubber eyecup – that's something I've suggested they extend, or offer a longer version for rifles with short rails. My FX Maverick Compact's raiser rail doesn't quite extend back far enough toward the shoulder to offer ideal head positioning with this short scope. All-in, the scope,

Three fixed recoil arrestor studs and sturdy mounting screws: Bruce approves.

rail, mounting screws, and battery weigh just 561g (1lb 4oz), which is pretty cool if you 'wear' your rifle hanging from an impromptu neck sling, like me.

The body is a pretty slim alloy tube, perfectly black-anodised, with a compact tubular protrusion on the left side housing the industry standard 18650 battery at rear, and IR illuminator at the front, including a similarly smooth focus collar. There's a sprung objective lens cap; smoothly rotating ridged collars for both objective and eyepiece focusing; and four holes underneath for Picatinny bracket mounting. The lens cap appears to stop jutting out, but gently press again and it folds aside, out of the way.

The scope's IP67 rated for waterproofing, and the controls take the form of a cruciform array of rubberised control buttons on the top, with power/standby at the rear and recording at the front. There's a two-slot Picatinny accessory rail on the right side, with a finger-friendly cap – once it's loosened the first time, that is – tucked behind that, sealed with an 'O'-ring. Underneath there's a standard MicroSD slot, USB-C cable slot and tiny LED charging indicator, should you charge a 18650 battery in situ – glows red/green in use.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

Straight off, the optics are very clear and sharp, and at base mag' (5x) I could clearly see my .177 holes in the Splatterburst target 31m away whilst zeroing in the barn. There's a generous 5-20x magnification range with no

'Technology, innovation, craftsmanship = a dream scope' – HITTAC's philosophy, and they are open to feedback from dedicated enthusiasts.

My favourite reticle 1 which is also first-focal plane (FFP).

Tiny reticle 3, a small cross.

Two rats about to be controlled from 25m in total darkness.

pixelation, and the Picture-in-Picture (PIP) window, when enable, offers double that, so you can have the main view 20x and the PIP window a pixelation-inducing 40x mag'! Uniquely, zooming is controlled by a small, grooved wheel at the back of the rubber control buttons, 'rightie-tightie, leftie-loosie' works fine here to zoom in and out. You can feel individual stops as you turn this wheel just a few mm, so it's a doddle to step up in 2.5x zoom increments between 5x, 7.5x, 10x, 12.5x, 15x, 17.5x and 20x, although it may be a bit small for gloved fingers. For those wanting a lower mag' and wider FOV for ratting – or wild boar – Hittac are already working on a 3-12x model, with a correspondingly wider field of view.

CONTROLS AND RETICLES

Looking from above, the buttons are of a cruciform pattern, with Power at the rear and Recording at the front. Quick presses of the power button also puts the scope into or out of standby, but be aware that this stops recording, so manual restart is required. I've asked the Hittac team if they can make recording auto-resume after waking from standby. A long press of the 'cog' button opens the very clear menu, via which you can select all the options, including zeroing. That enables a generous 26 profiles to be saved – literally as A-to-Z – plus three reticle designs in four colours. I've also asked if one of the colours can be changed to black – a preference of many shooters.

TO THE MAN CAVE!

Bruce is always keen to check out new developments in the world of NV/thermal, so I took it straight round for a session in his man cave – that's video 2 of my review. Our first impressions were very positive, the only negative being the PIP view not (yet) including the reticle crosshairs. I fed this straight back to Hittac, who promised to correct that omission shortly – great response! Overall, we were impressed with this daylight test, and even at base mag (5x) I could clearly make out the slim slots in his neighbour's 98-yard ridgeline air brick; superb! Initially, we assumed the mic' was the pinhole behind the memory card slot, then spotted the LED within when plugging in the USB cable. It wasn't until chatting to Hittac that I discovered the mic' pinhole tucked away underneath the generously proud, side Picatinny accessory rail – no issue adding accessories here!

REAL-WORLD TESTING

Next, I zeroed the scope on my Krait in just 15 shots within one of my local farms' barns in daylight, first with my backstop at 10m and then paced out to 30m. The 'One-shot Zeroing' was a doddle; the right-hand button is a hotkey to allow toggling through reticle colours, a cool feature! So, when I zoomed in and realised that the tiny + of my chosen FFP reticle (1) wasn't clear over the red target dot on my backstop, I just changed it to white, mid-zeroing. Shoot your group then press the record button to freeze the image, now relax and use the right and left buttons to navigate through the options, then the Rec/Power buttons to increase/decrease the values. Once happy, I unfroze the image and fired a few test groups, which naturally tightened up as I relaxed further. I recorded this session via the scope and my handy mobile phone video camera, so this will be video 3 – once edited and live.

This is one of the new breed of low-light day and night scopes, so

Looking great in one of its natural environments – total darkness.

Bruce suggested we did a full twilight test and comparison. I already own a DS35-50RF (gen.1, not the new LED-illuminated gen.2) and I still have a Cheetah C32F-RL on loan from HIKMICRO, so these were perfect for a side-by-side comparison.

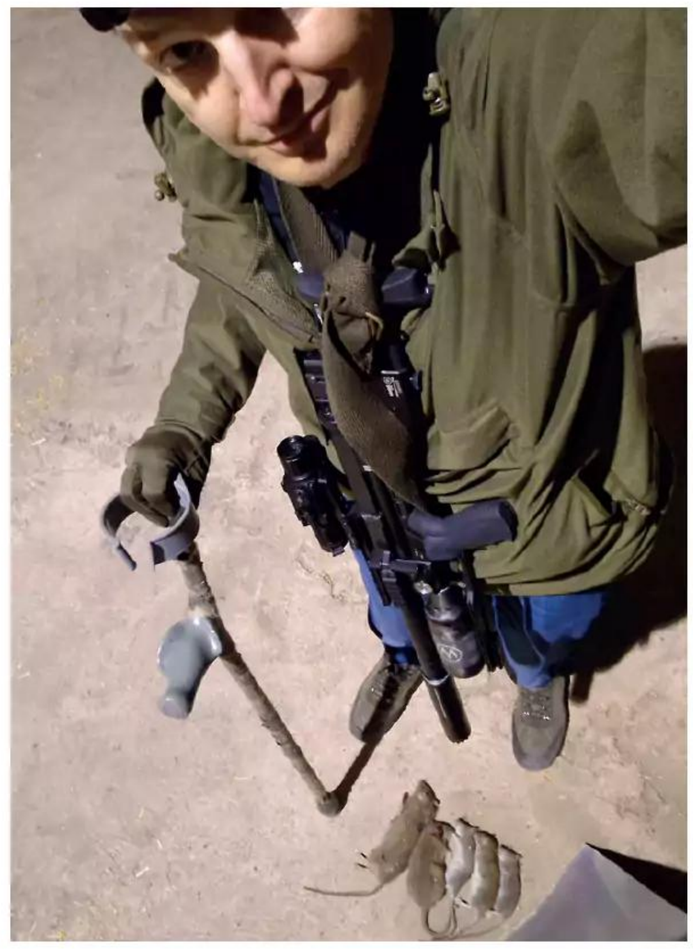
We hastily set up in a field, a few hundred metres from a substation, beside a wind turbine, just as daylight faded. Recording on all three scopes, I first wandered in front to help synch the feeds, then we compared their images as darkness descended. As expected, the Cheetah was the most sensitive, showing colour long after the others had gone dark. The Hittac was more sensitive than the DS35-50RF, although I prefer to get a significantly clearer image by switching to NV mode and using IR illumination. Oddly the Hittac was great out to nearly 100m, but beyond that, the substation at 263m looked like the image was murky, as if looking through pale gravy. After chatting to Hittac, I discovered we should 'keep the IR exposure compensation off, if it's unclear'. Our fault for not reading the manual.

PROOF OF USEFULNESS

With this scope running up to 20x mag', I could perhaps even use it on my 17HMR rifle for longer ranges, but first wanted to test it in familiar surroundings, by paying another visit to my local barns where I keep the rat population in check.

Once Bruce had headed home after our twilight testing, I slipped into another farm's grain barn and set up on my folding stool, positioning the Trigger Sticks as quietly as possible. From the doorway, I'd seen one rat along the far-right upper wall, but with the harvest ongoing, the farmer had left large grain piles in opposite corners, limiting my usual views of their hotspots. With this in mind, I stepped in quietly and set up a few metres forward of the near-right corner, so I had a good line of sight diagonally across to the usual hot-spot in the far-left corner. I left the IR illuminator on level 1, which was plenty for this 40m x 25m barn interior, although there are five IR brightness levels, plus 'auto'.

Once settled, I switched on and started to record, then activated the onboard IR. Invisible light flooded the pitch-black barn through the scope, and after a short wait, the first of the usual suspects appeared in



End of another nocturnal session, controlling the rats in a grain storage area.

the familiar horizontal crevice. I lined up and fired, but thought I'd missed because it disappeared into a rat run within the stone wall. Upon playback, I could see that my shot was good, so it couldn't have gone far before expiring. After a lull, I spotted movement then eyeshine behind one of the angled roof downpipes, as first one then a second small rat made their way down from behind the corrugated wall. I head-shot both in the space of ten seconds, result! Over the next hour, three more appeared, two in that spot and one back in the first crevice, so I called it a day after sending the farmer an update; six fewer rats to threaten his crops – five recovered.

SO IS IT PERFECT?

It's perfectly light and compact, yes, and the PIP will be perfect once they update the firmware via the HITTAC App. The audio recorded on my test videos was perfect, not too faint and no extraneous wind noise. I removed the eye-cup because despite the warm night, the lens was fogging, which was easy. We've discovered that 'IR compensation' must be deactivated to use it effectively at longer ranges (>100m) and avoid that mushiness. Bruce measured the 5x mag at 5.4-5.9x; minimum focus distance is 2m, and the FOV is 4.78o HX / 2.57o Vert'. Also, my central zeroed reticle is a little high because the supplied mount includes 20MOA, which the Krait already has; Hittac is going to offer options of 0MOA or 20MOA mounts, to suit everyone. All of which further demonstrates that Hittac islistening to the requirements of its intended customers, not only to accommodate their requirements, but also to offer choices.

CONCLUSIONS

Scan the QR codes to see many more photos in my Flickr album, including the whole of the CP258 user manual, and the first two of five videos accompanying this ongoing review. If you like the look of this miniature marvel, wait until you see the Hittac CP258R! Yes, Bin and his team have already created a more advanced model. Despite being not much larger, this further includes an onboard/onscreen laser rangefinder (LRF), WiFi linked to a comprehensive smartphone App to calculate real-time aiming solutions, to calculate your holdover in a second. You'll have to wait for that review, or have a look here for more info: https://hittac.co.uk/nyhpxb. My reviews of the space-age-looking AGT Uragan2 Prince, Sightmark's Wraith 4K Mini and Crosman 600 are ongoing, plus I hope to receive my renewed Scottish Airgun Licence and FAC any day now. In the meantime, please take care and of course enjoy your shooting. ✕

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PCP PERFORMANCE AT THE RIGHT PRICE

MAT MANNING gets to grips with the Reximex Lyra – an airgun that strikes an impressive balance between affordability, accuracy and distinctive styling

PHOTOGRAPHY ***JOE BRANSTON***

Mat Manning gets to grips with the Reximex Lyra – an airgun that strikes an impressive balance between affordability, accuracy and distinctive styling

It looks very much like Reximex is rewriting the rule book for pre-charged airgun pricing and performance. The common opinion concerning this type of hardware has long been that you have either to spend big money, or make serious compromises on performance, but guns like the subject of this review are tipping those preconceptions on their head.

The Reximex Lyra, distributed in the UK by Range Right, has a recommended retail price of just £375, which is remarkably good value for a multi-shot PCP. Apart from being so affordable, it shoots very well, and I also think it's a really nice-looking gun – traditionally styled with a sleek modern twist.

TAKING STOCK

The Lyra has a very distinctive ambidextrous Turkish walnut stock and the one on the review gun has some nice pattern in the grain. This is certainly a gun with a look all of its own, and that is partly down to the long fore end, which »

cradles the even longer cylinder. That extensive stretch of wood at the front facilitates a wide variety of hold styles because there is loads of room for your leading hand. The fore end is also quite slender, which I really like, and there are long, neat panels of chequering in just the right place on both sides.

Apart from being nice and steep, the pistol grip has a comparatively long drop and a bigger than usual cut-out behind it. If I was really splitting hairs, I would say that it could benefit from a slightly deeper scallop to cradle the base of the thumb, but the arrangement feels comfortable enough and delivers good trigger attack. The stock is further enhanced by tidy panels of chequering on both sides of the pistol grip.

Like most PCPs, the Lyra is a scope-only airgun. Although not adjustable, the cheekpiece is sufficiently high, and the result was good alignment between my eye and the large 6-24 x 52 KonusPro telescopic sight with which I decided to mount up. An aesthetic touch that I really like is the distinctive curve that sweeps through the stock beneath the cheekpiece, mirroring the cut-away behind the pistol grip.

Some very handy extras have been incorporated into the stock, which is finished with a curved rubber butt pad. Firstly, QR studs have already been fitted at the front and rear for sling and bipod attachment. I like it when manufacturers take care of this job in the factory because it saves me the time and trouble, plus it eliminates any risk of me wrecking the stock while I'm at it. The Lyra also comes supplied with a 65mm polymer Picatinny accessory rail, which can quickly and easily be attached via a neat brass thread sunken into the underside of the fore end.

At 106cm long, this Reximex certainly isn't a compact airgun. However, its slender proportions keep unscoped weight down to 3.5kg. It is a well-balanced rifle, and although its length can make it a bit of a handful in really cramped conditions, overall handling is very good.

Panels of tidy chequering adorn the long fore end in just the right place.

The walnut stock is nicely patterned and features a high cheekpiece and sweeping lines.

FEATURES AND FUNCTION

Despite its comparatively modest price tag, the Turkish-made Lyra looks and feels to be a well-built airgun and the black finish of its metalwork is very tidy. Its 58cm barrel is held secure by a retainer at the front of the cylinder, and has a half-inch UNF thread at the muzzle for silencer attachment. The gun comes supplied with the muzzle guard seen here.

Scope attachment is via about 16cm of Picatinny rail, which is split into two sections, one on each side of the magazine. The magazine does stand proud of the rail, and that's a factor that needs to be taken into account when choosing mounts of a sufficient height to avoid fouling.

The review gun featured here is .22 calibre and it runs a 12-shot magazine, whereas the .177 version holds 14 pellets. The magazine is kind to ammo and features a clear faceplate through which you can see a counter that shows how many pellets you have left. Reximex supplies this airgun with two magazines as well as a single-shot tray.

Cocking and loading is taken care of by a very nice, positive sidelever action. It has a long drop-down handle, which is grooved for an improved grip, but unfortunately, can't be reversed for left-handers. I found it a very gratifying mechanism to use; it's well-positioned and keeps shots coming quickly without any fuss.

The Lyra's trigger is equipped with a neat match-type blade that can be adjusted for height and angle. The actual trigger action is described as two-stage, but the first stage on the review gun was so short that I could hardly tell it was there. The trigger is adjustable via a screw through the front of the guard, but I actually liked this one as it was. Although the first stage was super-short, the final release was still crisp, predictable and free from creep.

There is a manual safety catch positioned just in front of the trigger blade. I prefer safety mechanisms to be further away from the trigger, but I will concede that the positioning of this one does make it easy to reach. It's safe when it's in the rearward position and you simply push it forward when you're ready to shoot.

POWER AND PERFORMANCE

Output from the Lyra was 11.2 ft.lbs. with Rangemaster Kaiser pellets. Consistency remained within seven feet per second over a string of 10 shots, which is pretty good. Power can be adjusted down to a minimum output of 6.5 ft.lbs., via the dial positioned just in front of the magazine slot. I don't know many shooters who want to wind down the power on sub-12 airguns, but it's a feature that could prove handy for plinking in smaller gardens.

The Lyra has a pretty substantial air cylinder. Pressure is shown in PSI on the gauge at the rear of the cylinder – the maximum 3000psi on its display equates

A removeable accessory rail is supplied and the stock is already fitted with QR studs.

Unscrew the muzzle guard and the barrel is threaded for silencer attachment.

Your mounts need to be high enough to clear the magazine.

Reximex supply the Lyra with two magazines and a single-shot tray.

The positive cocking and loading mechanism is driven by a sidelever with a long drop-down handle.

to just over 200 bar. When it's time to refill, pull the cap off the front of the cylinder and couple up with the supplied Foster connector. Shot count will obviously vary depending on your selected power output, but the .22 calibre test gun was returning around 100 shots from a full 200 bar fill at full power. The Lyra isn't regulated but you should be able to find a sweet spot of around 80 very consistent shots.

TESTING SESSION

Reximex airguns do pretty well in the accuracy stakes, and I was lucky to have a very calm afternoon for my main testing session. Shooting from the support of a bench, it was pretty much landing pellet on pellet at 20m. At 30m, groups became more ragged, but were still mostly one-holers, which means head shots would certainly be on for live quarry shooters. In windless conditions, groups were still mostly within 20mm centre-to-centre at 40m. The Lyra's sporter-style design and handling means that it shoots pretty well in all the usual stances, from prone to standing, so it should be a very dependable choice for pest control, as long as you keep within the usual responsible parameters for hunting.

The Reximex Lyra is a very impressive air rifle, and it's hard to believe that it costs well under £400. Whilst this airgun is unlikely to win any high-level competitions, that really doesn't matter because that's not what it is intended for.

The Lyra offers a very affordable route into shooting with PCP airguns, whilst showing no obvious signs of corner-cutting in order to achieve its competitive price. It is a very distinctive-looking airgun with elegant sporting lines and some genuinely useful additional touches – and it's well-made and puts pellets in the right place. Despite being quite long, it comes into the shoulder nicely and feels good to shoot. I've had a great time with it – range and field – and I can see it as another success story for Reximex.

TECH SPEC

Model: Lyra
Manufacturer: Reximex
Type: Multi-shot PCP
Cocking: Sidelever
Trigger: Two-stage, adjustable
Calibres: .177 and .22 (tested).
Overall length: 1060mm (42in)
Barrel length: 580mm (23in)
Length of pull: 365mm (14.5in)
Weight: 3.5kg (7.7lbs) without scope
Fill pressure: 200 bar
Shots per fill: up to 100 in sub-12
Energy of test rifle: Avg 11.2 ft.lbs.
Variation (10 shots): 7fps
Website: range-right.co.uk
PRICE: From £375

An adjustable match-type trigger blade delivers plenty of feel – the safety catch is just in front of it.

A clearly-marked air gauge shows pressure in PSI – the power dial is positioned to its rear.

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A WET DREAM-LINE

MICK GARVEY heads out in the rain in search of rabbits with his trusty FX

After last month's report from a new rabbit permission, I promised that I was coming back with the sub-12 FX Dreamline Compact Tactical for a night-time attack. Last time out, I took a quite leisurely 13 in full daylight, and experience tells us that a night-time approach would see an increase in success and numbers, but there's a caveat to my pest control with rabbits. I will always harvest the rabbits back into the food chain where possible, either by stocking my freezer, or passing them on to friends with birds of prey, or for their own consumption. I won't take them just for the sake of it, and the rate that Zeva gets through them I'm usually back every week! I just cannot abide waste, especially with such a good food source. Luckily the freezer had plenty of room, so another double figure bag would not go amiss.

I had the FX DLC Tac set up with the InfiRay SCP19 Saim thermal scope – the baby brother of the SCT35 Saim – and it's perfect for the sub-12 FX around barns for ferals and on rabbits. Even in humid and wet conditions, the image is excellent; pinpointing your quarry in long grass is a mere formality, and teamed up with the InfiRay FH35R Finder thermal spotter makes for a formidable set-up. I also intended to use the KJI K800 carbon-fibre tripod for those shots that required some elevation. The grass had been cut on the day after my last visit, which would be beneficial when picking out the rabbits before and after the shot.

BAD ADMIN

It had been four days since the daytime session, and darkness was arriving earlier by a few minutes each day – hardly noticeable, you'd think, but out in the open it could be felt. I set off just a little earlier with a clear sky, and I was happy to sit and watch over the paddocks until the sun dropped below the horizon, but first, I needed to get the FX set up, on the ground and over the gate, to keep any avoidable noise to a minimum. Gun out, tripod out, spotter ... pellets and magus. Where were they? The air turned blue with expletives as I pictured them on the kitchen counter top. I had hoped there might have been a handful of loose pellets in the gun bag, but it wasn't to be. So, I took the return round trip home of 20 miles, and lost the best part of an hour – bad admin on my part, no denial.

I arrived back at the gate, took a minute to collect my thoughts and put the unnecessary trip out of my mind. Right, here we go then, I thought ... and then I heard it; a single tap on the roof of the truck, followed by another then another. I closed my eyes, exhaled and shook my head. It was raining – that wasn't in the forecast! My plans were not going to be thwarted, though, and besides – what's a bit of rain? Well, as it turned out, it was quite a lot of rain and quite heavy at times, so a soaking was on the cards, but at least it wasn't bothering the rabbits too much.

THREE OUT OF FOUR AINT' BAD

The ability of the Finder to cut through these rainy conditions, like a knife through butter, made the rain easier to deal with, and from the gate, I could see four rabbits well within range at an LRF confirmed distance of 25 »

The FX Dreamline Compact Tactical is a superb sub-12 air rifle for the rabbits.

to 29 yards. I could use the gate post as support and stay my side of the gate.

I took the nearest one first, to get the account opened; my favoured 16gr AA Diablos dropped it on the spot, and the green crosshair was on the next one before I'd even cycled the next pellet into the chamber. The second one followed within seconds, and I was onto the third. Its head was up, but before it had chance of any reaction to what was going on, it took a Diablo between the eye and ear. Number four had sussed out something was going on and hopped off, about 60 yards toward a brick wall that formed a boundary between the paddocks and a row of private houses. Even though I could get close enough for the sub-12 shot, I'd didn't want to take a shot toward the houses, so I decided on option 'B' – to take the hedge-line toward the walled area, which would take me parallel to the wall and mask my movements.

The grass here had been kept short, so a laid-up shot from the Magpul bipod would work perfectly. Gun in hand and in a crouching position, I slowly made my way forward, scanned with the scope and was greeted with more than just the one that had scarpered. The walled area had plants and flowers along its length, which were an added attraction to the bunnies, and it was a place of refuge in the rain because there were eight sitting out at various distances, most within range and two or three debatable.

I couldn't ask for a better sight on arrival.

SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL

It's been a while since I laid up, waiting for rabbits to come out. I generally walk the land with the tripod, using stealth and whatever cover there is to get close, and it's quite a relaxed way to build up a decent bag, but I do get restless lying in one spot – I prefer to be on the move. For the time being, though, I took advantage of the situation and I can only liken it to shooting fish in a barrel. I was completely out of sight, low to the ground, and with a sturdy support from the bipod, so I just had to get the airgun pointing in the right direction, and slowly squeeze the trigger when the crosshairs and kill spot collided.

I was on a roll. I took six of the rabbits with six consecutive shots; number seven was a miss and simply down to my own overconfidence. I'd allowed a smidge too much holdover and I saw the pellet clearly passing just over the ears. Now, whether it was down to the rain or the silence afforded by the Donny FL Tanto, I don't know, but the rabbit stayed put along with the last of the eight just a few yards further out. It was time to bring the belly crawl into the game. I used elbows, knees and feet to edge increasingly closer to my targets, until in the required position, then took a second to gain composure and get the breathing right before steadying my eye into the scope. One final out breath and 'schwack', over it flipped, kicking its legs briefly. The scope was already on the last one, but it needed a spot of hold-over again, and I wasn't going to make the same mistake as before. I could get used to this laying up. I'd taken 11 by now; the first three had been left by the gate, and these eight were stashed in the rucksack. The rain was getting heavier and I could feel it running down my back as it came through my fleece.

HUGE TEMPTATION

After placing the rabbits in the rear of the truck, I took a walk across to the farmer's fields, which was the next area to check out. In the distance, I could see that the clouds were breaking. I was already into double figures, it was approaching midnight, and the freezer would be nicely stacked with tonight's takings.

The grass had been cut, but hadn't been baled, so the KJI would be needed. With the Dreamline being so slim and having a relatively small diameter air tube, the Reaper Grip

I do love a gatepost for a supported shot.

A nice 16 for the night, but there's more to come, I know.

doesn't clamp down on the gun, so it's used more in the style of shooting sticks, just using the Reaper cradle as support. An Arca Swiss attachment could overcome this, though.

Immediately after stepping through the gap in the dry stone wall I could see several rabbits on show, but if you recall from last month, there is an adjacent farm that I don't have permission for – yet – and it was heaving with rabbits. The temptation was great, but so is my willpower and integrity; it's not my land, and armed trespass is not my thing.

My fields are split into two by another dry stone wall and the furthest smaller field is served by a gateway, so the plan was to make my way to this field, take anything that showed on the way, plus anything in the smaller field, then exit and use the walling to cover my movements whilst checking out the larger field. This also gave me the advantage of being in a raised position looking down the field, rather than having to take shots toward the horizon.

A single bunny sat out halfway between me and the gate, and once more, a crouching approach got me to within 35 yards. It was game over for this big buck and it went straight into the rucksack. The small field yielded two youngsters, which I actually thought were bigger and further out – a common problem with thermal flattening out your view. The two smallest rabbits of the night were added to the bag and I moved on to my position, to overlook the field below.

A PROPER STATE!

The rain was showing no sign of abating, but from where I stood, there was a handful of rabbits visible. As I moved forward, more started to show behind the 'fluffed-up' grass and a nice 'one – two' marked the end of the evening. I was covered in mud from crawling earlier, soaking wet, the rain was increasing to what can only be described as a proper downpour, and to top it all, I checked the rain coming in through my clothing – it was mainly watered down blood from the rucksack, and it was running into my boxers and socks. What a state to be in! That was it – I had 16 rabbits, and I'd had enough of the rain. The Dreamline was wet, but as always, it had been on fire. I promised myself that I'd return and have a day/night to remember. It's written in the stars – if I could see them though the clouds and rain. ✕

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M.A.D. WORLD!

GARY CHILLINGWORTH reports from the recent M.A.D. UKAHFT rounds 6 and 7

Okay, it's my favourite time of the year – that M.A.D. double-header, a weekend of shooting, laughter, pain, tears, debauchery and general all-round merriment. Now, for some shooters on Saturday night, there is alcohol to dull the pain of the day's shooting, and that is because traditionally, that is the day we climb the hill of terror, also, known as 'the hill of doom', 'the hill of torment' or quite simple 'that xxxxing hill'. Richard and Kev, who were the course setters and may they burn in eternal hellfire, always set the hill course so that it takes no prisoners.

Last year, I did well on the hill, only missing the free-stander. This year, though, my first shot on the hill was a 25mm at 40 yards in the V of a dead tree; I aimed, I fired, and I think I shot a squirrel in the bum, I missed by that much. I then managed to kill the 8-yarder on the next peg and then another two misses and another doughnut. I hate that hill, but the views from the top are spectacular and when you are that high up, no one can hear you cry.

TWO-DAY EVENT

The double-header is a two-day event and day two was a technical one, so Richard and Kev had put out a truly technical course. The range traps, had traps. If you looked at a target and it looked like a range trap, it wasn't, and a simple target was probably a trap, except for those that weren't. Have you ever shot a comp' in which halfway round, you not only hoped that you would fail the chrono' so the pain could be over, but you also needed to take large amounts of pain killers to stop your head from »

Big Ross shot amazingly on day one.

Greg Hensman on his way to a win on both days.

exploding. Well, if you haven't, come and shoot at M.A.D. next year.

To give you an example; peg no 1 was a 25mm head-shot rat, poking its head out from behind a tree, and because of the wind, you had to aim at the tree and hope that the wind would blow the pellet into the kill or plate. Now, this is bad enough, but the group in front of us, hit the tree, killed the target and missed completely and they all shot at 40 yards with 1 mil-dot of wind given – welcome to M.A.D!

Another target on day one was a head-shot rabbit that I watched eight people miss. They all shot it for high 30s in yards, but it was at 33 and I was so convinced the target had failed, that I talked Harry Compton into having it checked and it was fine, so, sorry Harry – my bad.

SAD DAY FOR MALDON

It was also a sad day. Ian Bainbridge has been a stalwart of Maldon for years; he has been a shooter, mentor, trainer, Masters organiser and most recently, cook, cleaner and bottle washer and has kept us all fed and taken care of for years. However, as Ian is now 133 years old, he has had to make a choice between golf or shooting. The M.A.D. double-header was his last ever event, so thank you, Ian, for your service – and off to the first tee with you.

Out on the course we had some great shooters and it was nice to catch up with some friends. The reigning HFT World Champion, Neil Palmer was trialling the new Daystate Red Wolf Grand Prix and shot amazingly well, He took first place with a stunning 57.

As ever, we had a huge array of shooters, from young to old; Stick shooters, Recoiling, Ladies, .22 and Open classes. The world of HFT is a place where no matter who you are or what you shoot – as long as it's sub-12 ft.lbs. – you can find a home and people of a like mind. There were some shooters who were amazing over the weekend and these are the people that we truly hate.

Sun out, guns out – Aaron and his mighty Red Wolf.

ALL THE RESULTS

On the Saturday, Elliot Compton took the Open class; Michal Kurdybelski won the Recoiling with a stunning 53; the .22 was taken by Ed Tandi; and Jo Cogger won the Ladies; Emily Smith was top Junior; and Greg Hensman won the Sticks. Lloyd Whitehead was top Vet and the team trophy went to Throckmorton

On the Sunday, Neil Palmer took the Open class; again, Michal Kurdybelski won the Recoiling; Jenni Smith took the Ladies; Emily Smith won the Juniors; the .22 class went to Paul Charman, and the Vets was taken by Bill Birch, who certainly did not let himself down, the sport down or anything else. Well done. Bill! Sticks went to Greg, and team went to Throckmorton (Boo)

Thanks to everyone who made this year so great and I hope to be back in 2024. ✕

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WORKING THE STOCK EXCHANGE

The Stingray gets put back together this month, with some internal upgrades. Plain sailing or test of patience? ***PETE EVANS*** takes us through the process

Last month, we left off with a piston seal that had disintegrated, and most of the rifle in pieces. I wouldn't be surprised if this rifle had never been apart because there were no signs of damaged screws or pins, and that piston seal must be the original item. To start with a clean slate, I was keen to undertake a little more stripping and cleaning before getting the components together. The story continues with a look at the cocking link.

RE-LUBE

To ensure lubrication of the cocking link, it's a good idea to detach it from the barrel. This will mean drifting out the roll pin, for which you will need to select a suitable-sized drift – a little smaller than the hole, yet not so small that it drops through the pin. With the pin removed, it will be tight, the cocking link will pull out – there are not bushings fitted.

Clean the link, inspect the cocking surface where it joins the piston, observing for signs of wear or damage, and clean out the slot in the barrel. When satisfied, lubricate with some molybdenum grease, and reinsert the roll pin. These pins are sometimes more tapered at one end than the other, so always insert the tapered end first.

As a matter of course, the breech seal was renewed, this simply prises out – make sure it's refitted the correct way round. The flat side sits inside the recess, with the convex sealing surface facing out.

Given the state of the piston washer,

"To start with a clean slate, I was keen to undertake a little more stripping and cleaning before getting the components together. The story continues"

I was expecting a lot of debris in the cylinder, and I wasn't disappointed. It took some considerable time with penetrating spray, and a cloth and dowel to remove all the seal remnants, some of which appeared to be burnt into place. With everything clean, it was just a matter of running my emery cloth-covered dowel inside the slots in the cylinder to remove any burrs, remembering to clean out again afterwards.

TAKE UP THE SLACK

Usually, the old piston washer would lever off, but this step dispensed with, the new seal was pushed into place. There didn't appear to be any problems with the old spring, no collapsed or broken coils, so there wasn't a good reason not to use it. It wasn't too bad a fit inside the piston, although there was some room for improvement. Selecting some thin brass shim material, I set about making a liner to take up the slack.

Start by measuring the internal diameter of the piston, multiplying by three, for the width, and take the length from the outside of the piston. These measurements get you in the general ballpark, but be prepared for some final trimming. Cut some serrations at one end, I use pinking shears, and then bend the tabs through 90 degrees. These 'teeth' will form an anchor for the liner – there will be a thrust washer fitted ahead of the front guide.

Attention now back on the spring; it was sent over to Shauny Coughlan to make a new rear / front guide and a flat thrust washer. Readers will recall from last month that although the original Webley guide was unbroken, it didn't really offer adequate support along the full length of the spring. Because there is a projection on the end of the cylinder end block, it is necessary to drill a 9.5mm hole at the end of the guide to accommodate this. A hole of this size can easily weaken »

STEP-BY-STEP

1 Drift out the roll pin to release the cocking link.

2 The new seal will simply push into place.

3 Brass piston liner will eliminate mechanical resonance.

4 My new spring is uniform width, with extra material at the base.

5 With a little moly paste, the piston will slide into position.

6 The right-hand breech shim will be slightly concave.

7 Enter the cocking shoe, whilst returning the barrel to the action.

8 Replace the breech, when everything is lined up.

9 Some adjustment of the breech screw necessary before replacing the keeper screw.

10 This image shows relative position of piston sear and safety slide from the right.

11 Piston sear and safety slide viewed from left, note the position of the sear spring.

12 With the piston sear and safety slide in place, there should be a small area of the sear protruding from the trigger housing.

13 With the trigger blade and sear temporarily in place, check the position of the sears when cocking – spring not in place.

14 Remember to fit the trigger tension spring before fitting the trigger blade for the last time.

"Thinking back, I've probably achieved the outcome that would have resulted from using a gas-ram, without the added expense!"

the guide structure, so with this in mind, Shauny left more depth of material at the end of the guide. With more pre-load on the spring from this guide, and the front guide/thrust washer, let alone the extra compression from the new washer, I took the decision to shorten the spring by three coils.

REBUILD STARTS

With a little molybdenum paste on the edge of the piston seal, and the raised section immediately behind the seal, the piston assembly can be re-entered and pushed to the end of the cylinder. It should be ensured that the cocking slot in the cylinder coincides with the slot in the piston.

Now it's time to prepare the barrel for refitting, by replacing the shims, one on each side of the breech block. If you check carefully, you'll see that these two shims are different. One is slightly convex, this is fitted to the right breech face; the other is flatter and fitted to the left. There is a handy recess cut in the breech face to accommodate the shims, and they are quite thick, so shouldn't migrate on refitting. Ensure that there is some molybdenum paste on these surfaces before offering it back to the cylinder. It should be possible to enter the end of the cocking link into the piston, whilst simultaneously lining the breech block up so the securing screw can re-inserted. Tighten the screw; this will be governed by needing to refit the small locking screw, which interfaces with the edge of the main securing screw. In practice, I tightened this as far as possible, and then slackened slightly so that the locking screw could be fitted.

TESTING TRIGGER

So we come to the trigger, which is where things can go horribly wrong. The trigger is not a complicated design, although it can be fiddly, and unless you do it right, it could be a cause of much irritation, but as long as you get the initial fitting of the top sear and safety slide right, the rest will be plain sailing. It's worth assembling the sear, its spring and safety slide, off the gun to get a relative idea of how things interact.

Start with fitting the spring to the sear, it will have a 90-degree bend at one end, and this enters the hole on the forward edge on the right-hand side. The coil will sit opposite the large hole through the sear, and the end of the spring with a hook-like end will curl over the back. When fitted, the sear's hooked end will engage with the piston to hold it back, so the top edge of the sear is virtually horizontal – this will be important later. Now slide the safety down the left-hand side of the sear, and hook the end of the spring over it. It will be noticed that there is a small peak on the safety slide. As the slide moves back and forth to engage, the end of the spring passes over this peak, giving the characteristic switch-like feel of the safety catch.

TRIGGER FITTING

To start the refitting process, insert the top sear with the spring fitted. I found the easiest way was to pass it through the rear of the cylinder and drop it down into the trigger housing – the spring should not have moved position – a punch helps to get its relative position with the hole through the trigger housing. Now slide the safety catch through the rear of the trigger housing, lift the sear spring so that it sits over the top of the safety catch.

Use a punch to line up the hole through the trigger housing with the sear, and refit the pin, to hold its position. At this point, lift the end of the sear until the end protrudes from the base of the trigger housing, and then refit the pin to the end of the trigger housing, this passes through the U-shaped hole at the end of the safety catch.

With the two pins fitted, the end of the sear should protrude a little from the bottom of the trigger housing. If it doesn't, and the sear is unable to move, take out the pin from the front of the housing and repeat the process of lifting the sear, and replacing the pin. At this point, I would recommend refitting the trigger blade and its sear, as a temporary measure to make sure everything is right before fitting the spring. The blade will be floppy because the tension spring can't be fitted yet, but it will still be possible to test. Cock the gun slowly, the top sear should engage with the piston, push the trigger blade forward to give it some tension, and the trigger sear should engage.

Use a length of dowel to push the piston forward – it should hold back on the trigger – squeeze the trigger and the piston should release. If all is well, remove the trigger, and be sure to fit the C clips to the end of the two remaining trigger pins.

RE-SPRINGING

To prepare the spring, treat it to a light coating of molybdenum grease, insert the thrust washer and then follow with the spring and guides fitted. Make sure the back block is fitted with the correct orientation, the threaded hole with the flat milled into it will be at the bottom for the trigger guard screw. On this gun, the back block was pinned into place without the aid of a cramp, although if in doubt, don't hesitate to use one.

The trigger blade and sear can be refitted; make sure the trigger tension spring is inserted first and that it sits on the platform at the rear of the trigger sear. The whole mechanism will benefit from a light oiling with a silicone-free light oil, I do find that grease tends to trap dirt, which can lead to sticky rough triggers. To get the trigger tensioned, refit the long grub screw into the top of the back block.

Refit the stock and the open sights, and it's job done. There was just one last part for me, and that was fitting the muzzle brake, which I managed to get from TW Chambers. Following some initial bedding shots, the action settled to a respectable 11.1 ft.lbs., twang-free, with a quick lock-time, similar in some respects to my old Theoben Countryman gas-ram. The spring shortening may have added some stiffness to the spring, resulting in this observation. Thinking back, I've probably achieved the outcome that would have resulted from using a gas-ram, without the added expense!

Next month, I'm hoping to bring you a feature on an unusual variant of a well-known British classic, and yes – it will be a springer! ✕

PARTS USED

TW Chambers
www.twchambers.co.uk
Piston seal: £11.33
Breech seal: £5.80
Muzzle brake: £16.17

TOP VALUE GUNS

TIM FINLEY grabs another classic pistol this month in the form of the hugely popular Crosman 1377

POINTS OF INTEREST

For the money, the 1377 is the perfect family plinking pistol. With no CO2 bulbs to buy, all you need is eye protection and you are good to go. The variable power makes it very versatile, too.

This month, I have a classic airgun for you – it even has the word 'classic' in its name. It's hard to believe that this gun only came into being in 1977 as the .22 calibre 1322 – that's 40 years ago! I know … my, how time flies.

I first came across a Crosman 1377 in 1989 when I received one for winning at a field target shoot at Waverly Field Target Club. The one I got then was the Mark 2 version of the Crosman American Classic pistol, made from 1978 to 1996. It has a brown synthetic grip and fore end, a plastic breech block and a steel sliding breech cover. Also there is a magnet on the tip of the bolt for holding steel BBs, although I never shot BBs through my 1377.

The current 1377 is now on the three-point something iteration; in 2012 they changed to black grip and fore end; in 1998 they also ditched the BB magnet, thankfully, and went for a small pistol-sized bolt action. Back to 2023 and the latest model is called the 'P1377'. I'm already really familiar with the 1377, so I could appreciate all of the changes, and I like the modern black furniture.

»

1990's advert for the Classic 1377.

Tim shooting the 1337 American Classic.

PUMP-ACTION PNEUMATIC

The Crosman American Classic 1377 is a pump-action pneumatic air pistol. You pull the fore end down and forward to swing it out some 130 degrees – the pivot is at the front. This allows air to be sucked into the compression tube. You then push the fore end back up toward the action to lock it back into place, and this pushes air past a non-return valve into the compression chamber.

It's a variable-power air pistol, so the user determines how many pumps they want to put into the 1377 – the more pumps, the higher the power. Crosman recommend no less than two pumps and no more than ten. Also, don't fire the gun on an empty compression chamber.

The gun will not fire until the action has been cocked. To do this, there is a metal bolt on the right-hand side of the action. Pull up and back to open the breech and cock the action. I would always put the manual safety catch on first, and this is situated right behind the trigger. It goes in from the left to put on to 'safe'; push back out from the right to 'fire'. There is a red ring around the button that can be seen when the gun is set in the 'fire' mode, and the safety locks the trigger forward.

EASY LOADER

Loading is easy. The pellet tray is 11mm long, so some shorter pellets can tip over if you angle the gun down when loading. I would recommend four pumps as a minimum, and with 7.9 pellets it ran at 250 feet per second, or one foot pounds. With eight pumps, it goes up to 2.2 ft.lbs. Going to the maximum ten it went to 2.6 ft.lbs. – after eight pumps it gets harder to close the fore end, by the way.

Unsurprisingly, the fore end is made for pumping; there are moulded grooves on each side to place the thumb and fingers and the groove design is carried on at the top of the grip, behind the trigger and safety catch. There are other stipple-effect grip panels on the fore end and grip, too.

The 1377 is ambidextrous, of course, and it's not a small pistol at 342mm long. Saying that, it's not over heavy, so it could be a family plinking pistol. It weighs only 0.85kg, really light for what it is, but Crosman make use of a lot of tough plastic materials.

SIGHTS TO BEHOLD

The gun has open sights with a 322mm sight base, with a fixed post, front sight moulded as part of the end cap. The rear sight on this new pistol is the same as the one I won back in the 1980s, but that's not to say it's bad. It adjusts for windage via loosening a large slot-headed screw holding it to the breech block, and the elevation is a smaller Posidrive-headed screw on the back plate – taking this out also allows the notch to be changed for a peep-hole sight. I'd stick with the notch, it's easier to use, but the Americans seem to love a peep sight.

The trigger pull weight came in at 2.5kg on my electronics trigger gauge. With the long, steel-rifled barrel and long sight base, the 1377 is very accurate – 8mm centre-to-centre groups at six yards.

I really do rate the Crosman 1377 for anyone wanting to take up a bit of recreational plinking because it's very good value for money and extremely accurate. It's been around for so long that there are many custom-made bits you can add on; from brass bolt handles to wooden grips. You can even fit a shoulder stock and clamp brackets around the barrel, with an 11mm rail on top, so you can fit a red dot or scope. The term 'classic' is not overused for this Crosman American Classic! ✕

Many thanks to Gill and Jake for help in production of this article.

TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: Crosman
Country of origin: USA
Distributor: Range Right Ltd
Model: 1377
Calibre: .177 (4.5mm)
Action: Pump-charging
Sights: Fixed front post, adjustable rear notch
Sight base: 322mm
Safety: Manual
Overall length: 342mm
Barrel length: 252mm
Weight: 0.kg
Trigger weight: 0.85kg
PRICE: From £105

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EARLY AUTUMN GLORY

MAT MANNING embraces the seasonal shift and enjoys a morning in the woods targeting grey squirrels as they banquet on beech mast

PHOTOGRAPHY ***JOE BRANSTON***

Whilst I hate to wish my life away, I am always happy to see the first signs of autumn's arrival. The long, hot days of summer really aren't for me – I much prefer misty mornings followed by cool days in the woods and long, dark evenings spent in front of a crackling fire.

It really doesn't feel very autumnal here in Somerset just yet, but there are enough signs of its approach to get me excited. The nightly dewfall is getting heavier, adorning the increasingly abundant cobwebs with droplets that glisten in the weakening morning sun as I go about my rounds in the woods. Hedgerow berries including, hawthorn, rosehips and sloes as looking plump and ripe. By the time you read this, I will have picked a generous crop of the latter for this year's batch of sloe gin – one of my favourite autumn rituals.

This bountiful season also brings a rich crop of seeds and nuts – an important source of food for birds and mammals as they prepare for the tough months of winter that lie ahead. This year's beech mast crop seems to be a particularly heavy one on my patch, and the woodland floor beneath mature beech trees is littered with empty husks discarded by feasting critters.

Woodpigeon and jays love to gorge on beech mast, and so do grey squirrels. Find a stand of beech trees at this time of year and you can be pretty confident of encountering the destructive little rodents – which is great news if, like me, you embrace every possible opportunity to drive down their numbers.

KEEP UP THE PRESSURE!

Just this morning, I managed to grab a swift session in a small wood where grey squirrels have caused a huge amount of damage to young trees over recent years. I am pleased to say »

Clear evidence of tree damage inflicted by bark-stripping grey squirrels.

Mat lines up for a kneeling shot after a departing squirrel makes the fatal mistake of pausing.

Tricky stalking conditions around the beeches prompt Mat to dig in and wait for the squirrels to show themselves.

that their bark-stripping has declined significantly since I've been thinning them out, but it is still evident and will quickly increase if I take the pressure off and give them a chance to bounce back.

My usual approach to squirrel control revolves around the use of feeding stations, but today's outing was a less targeted stroll around the woods. These sessions seldom yield the sort of tallies that I would expect to amass when staking out feeders from the cover of a hide, but they enable me to cover plenty of ground and to assess squirrel activity and signs of their damage whilst I'm about it.

Creeping through the first block of woodland, I was encouraged by the lack of squirrel dreys up in the boughs. These nests usually take the form of a tangled thatch of twigs and leaves, and my friends and I knocked out dozens of them during a couple of drey-poking outings earlier in the year. Recent bags from my feeding stations would suggest that we missed quite a few, though, and I have no doubt that plenty of these nests will be revealed when the leaves have fallen.

STAY SHARP

It is important to keep your eyes peeled and move with stealth during roving forays because, although grey squirrels are likely to be concentrated around their food sources, they can still be encountered more or less anywhere. Sightings will often be distant ones – fleeting glimpses of departing squirrels – because the artful little blighters know that it's wise to make themselves scarce at the first sight or sound of someone approaching through the woods.

A light fall of rain had softened the previously brittle leaf litter, which helped to stifle the sound of my footfalls, but I

A roving start produces the goods and Mat retrieves the first squirrel of the morning.

Patience pays off and Mat is rewarded with a shot at a mast-munching squirrel.

still tried to tread as carefully as possible and stopped every few paces to scan for any sign of a squirrel. Sometimes these crafty rodents will freeze rather than bolt when they sense danger. Motionless squirrels can be almost impossible to spot as they cling to the tree trunk or peep out from the gap between forked branches, so I always make a point of carefully checking all around me, including the area I have just passed through, before moving on.

It is also important to remember that

"Dense patches of leaves and deep shade made difficult work of surveying the boughs and the first squirrel I managed to spot had already clocked me"

squirrels spend much of their time on the ground during the day, especially at this time of year when the woodland floor can be littered with tasty morsels. This fact was brought home to me when I spooked a squirrel that was foraging amongst the fallen leaves as I rounded a bend in the ride.

The startled rodent scrambled up the first tree it reached, and then made the classic mistake of stopping to look back. I have a feeling that it thought it was exploiting the 'if I keep still he won't spot me' ruse, but owing to the fact that the squirrel was now clearly presented about 25 metres from where I was standing, the strategy was fatally flawed. Settling down into the kneeling position, I drew my BSA R10 TH into my shoulder and steadied the crosshairs onto the squirrel's head. The pellet hit home with a 'crack' and the first squirrel of the morning was in the bag.

SQUIRREL MAGNET

I entered what I regard as the main block of woodland, and chose a path that took me through a stand of mature beech trees. These towering specimens are usually heavy with mast at this time of year, and the glut of food is like a magnet to greedy grey squirrels.

Drifting through the shadows as quietly as possible, I scoured the trees around me as I reached the hotspots among the beeches. Dense patches of leaves and deep shade made difficult work of surveying the boughs and the first squirrel I managed to spot had already clocked me and quickly disappeared into the cover.

Another spooked squirrel convinced me that my best option was to sit and wait for a while. Tucked in against the base of a tree, I would create no movement or sound to alert skittish squirrels to my presence and I'd also stand a better chance of detecting the subtle tell-tale signs that can reveal the location of feeding bushy-tails.

CLASSIC SIGN

Less than 20 minutes after settling in, I noticed the faint but unmistakable patter of beech husks bouncing down through the branches and on to the woodland floor. This shower of discarded shells is a classic sign of squirrels dining on mast and will usually lead you to the diner's whereabouts.

I eventually traced the start-stop cascade of husks to a patch of leaves on the outer limbs of a high branch. Straining to see up into the dappled light, I couldn't spot the squirrel until a scan through the scope revealed a fluffy tail poking out from behind a cluster of shaking foliage.

A very frustrating few minutes followed as the squirrel, which was about 30 metres away from me, continued to stuff its face with beech seeds whilst managing to show me nothing more than the tip of its tail. Eventually, though, the greedy rodent revealed its head as it clambered further along the limb. I quickly lined up on its skull and touched off the trigger to release a shot that dropped it to the woodland floor with a wallop.

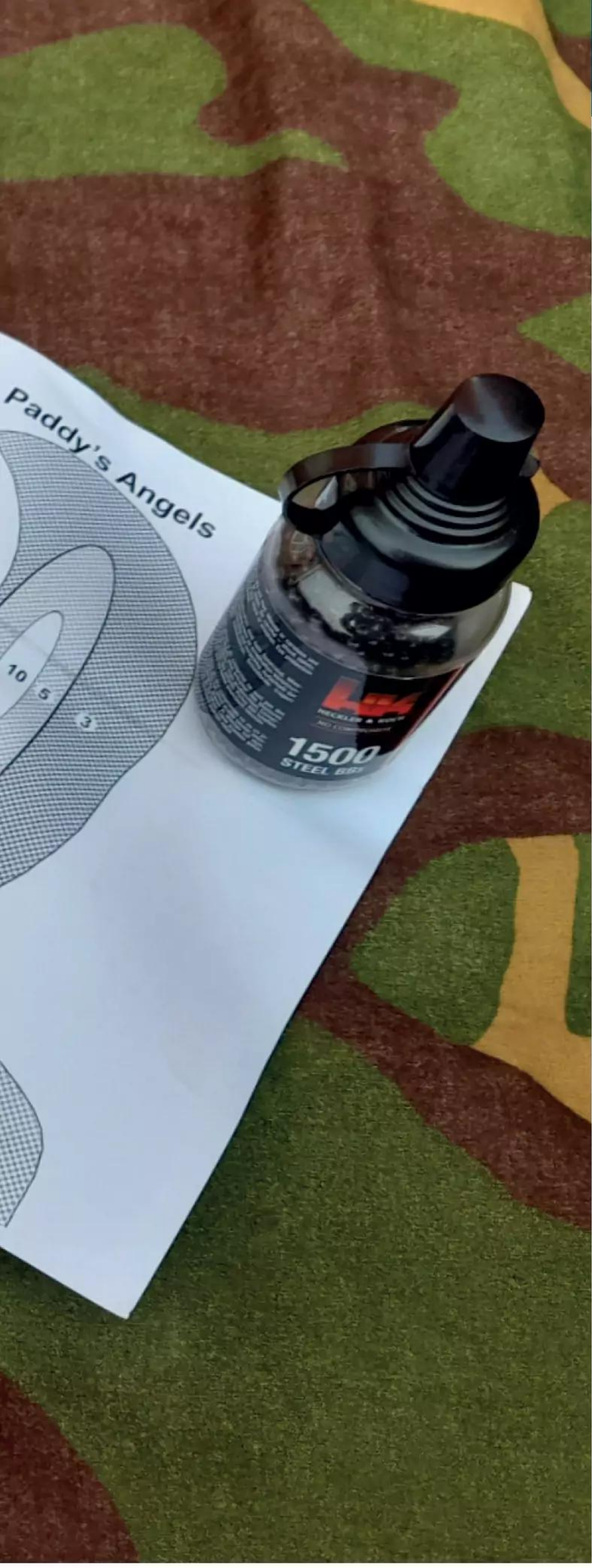
I never get bored during ambushes like this and would have been happy to have sat there for another hour or more, but a busy day ahead meant that I soon had to head for home. No more squirrels were added to my tally during the somewhat hurried return stroll, but I was happy to have accounted for two whilst savouring the woods in their early-autumn glory. ✕

MAT'S KIT

GUN: BSA R10 TH air rifle ..... bsaguns.co.uk
SCOPE: Zeiss Conquest V4 scope ..... zeiss.co.uk
MOUNTS: SportsMatch scope mounts ..... sportsmatch-uk.com
AMMO: Rangemaster Sovereign pellets ..... daystate.com
JACKET: Ridgeline Grizzly III jacket ..... ridgelineclothing.co.uk
BOOTS: Aigle Parcours 2 ..... bisley-uk.com

HOSTAGE SITUATION!

ADRIAN COOPER reports on the recent UBC Police Pistol Competition



Ever get bored with idly plinking away at cans, using your pistol? Yes, me too, so if you feel like more of a challenge, then you might want to consider shooting competitively against like-minded people. 'Competitively?' I hear you say, 'but I'm no Jeff Cooper or Jerry Miculek!' Don't worry, me neither, but if you don't have a focus and incentive then you're never going to be, are you?

Quite a few years ago, I was looking online for any kind of postal or club competitions that I could take part in, especially for practical, pistol-type stuff using multi-shot CO2. There was a wealth of results from websites in the USA, but hardly anything in the UK apart from IPAS, and nothing nearby to me, and then I stumbled upon the Umarex Boy's Club. After joining the forum to get some more information, I was delighted to connect with a whole host of like-minded shooters – mostly pistol, too! – and even better, they ran a huge range of online, free-to-enter competitions! I have to admit that I was a little overwhelmed with the choice at first, but after reading through all the very clear and detailed rules and courses of fire, I settled on one in particular – The Police Pistol Competition.

The beauty with this one is that there are no restrictions on the type of airgun that can be entered, so you can use any multi-shot (6-round capacity) pistol in any calibre you like. At the time, I only had the one pistol, an RWS C225 with an extended 6-inch barrel, but this has since grown to quite a few more! The latest acquisition is an Umarex Smith and Wesson M&P45 M2.0. This follows the tried and tested 8-shot rotary magazine format, and is essentially a CP99 in a different, all polymer skin, so it's a bit cheaper and an ideal way to get started in this type of shooting. Given that the M&P stands for 'Military and Police' it seems like the ideal tool for the job!

SIMPLE TARGET BOX

Once you've downloaded and printed your targets from the competition website (umarexboysclub.weebly.com) or ordered online (airtargets.co.uk/umarex-boys-club) you just need a safe backstop and 6 yards of space.

Many of us have very simple target boxes for the A4-sized targets, which are made from a suitably sized cardboard box stuffed with rags, and the target secured to the front with tape or elastic bands. Please make sure that the filling in the box will stop the pellet, but these CO2 pistols only produce around 2 ft.lbs. of energy, so just a few layers will usually do the trick. To be extra safe, you can put a board in the back of the box.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

There are three stages to the competition, each requiring six shots.

Stage 1 is using the 'Fedora' target and involves three sets of double taps to the centre of the target. Each double tap is done in three seconds, with any outside the time incurring a penalty.

Stage 2 is using the same target – I usually just mark my shots from Stage 1 and re-use – but this time, the 'assailant' is wearing body armour, so you have two shots to the body and one to the head in five seconds. This is repeated for a second string, for a total of six shots.

Stage 3 is using the deceptively simple 'Paddy's Angels' target. You have 12 seconds to fire six shots: two at the left target, two at the right, then one at the left and right. There are severe penalties here: if any shot hits the 'hostage' in the centre, you lose ALL score for the stage! Yes, I've done this on more than one occasion.

When you've completed the course of fire, you just tot up your scores for each stage on its dedicated Scorecard and email them to the respective competition manager (details on the webpage). In this case, it's our lovely founder Jason 'Cookie' Curtis.

All the competitions are operated on an honesty basis. If you cheat, you're only cheating yourself! There are two rolling, six-monthly seasons per year, so you can shoot every month all year, or just join in for a six-month season if you »

TIPS

- You can practise as much as you like, but once you commit to doing the competition targets you must submit those scores.
- Find a rhythm for your shots to make use of the available time. This is especially important on the last stage. Using an interval timer app on your phone is really helpful.
- Concentrate on trigger control, especially if you're shooting a double-action pistol because you'll be snatching and throwing your shots all over the place otherwise.
- Practise lifting the pistol up quickly from the low, ready position, so the sights are aligned when you're on the target.
- Make sure you've got sufficient ammo and gas/CO2 before starting. Use lightweight wadcutter pellets to make clean holes for easier scoring. Club favourites are RWS Geco/Hobby and H&N Econ. A piece of masking tape on the back of the target prevents ripping.

prefer. All the results are in a table on the website and it's great to see how your scores improve and how they compare to others. Paddy emails out end-of-season certificates to all the entrants and winners, so you'll have something to display proudly on your gunroom/cabinet wall.

M&P45 M2.0 PERFORMANCE

The sights are very good, with an ideal ratio between front sight and rear sight notch width. They have yellow dots that help with visibility, and the rear sight is adjustable for windage. This example shot exactly to point of aim for elevation at 6 yards, although I would have preferred to be able to use a 6 o'clock hold.

The trigger is very respectable in double action and breaks right at the end of its travel. There's also an over-travel bumper cast into the frame, which really helps to keep the sights on target when the shot breaks. If slow, deliberate shooting is more your thing then you can cock it for single action, but that's not much use for this fast-fire comp!

The grips are probably the grippiest grips that I've ever gripped on a polymer-framed pistol! Unfortunately, there aren't any interchangeable back straps as on the real version, but I found the fit perfect for my average-sized hands.

The first version of the M&P came with one pellet and one BB magazine, but the M2.0 comes with two pellet magazines and makes no reference to BBs in the manual. Whether the barrel in this version is different, I can't say, but I guess you wouldn't really want to shoot BBs in a rifled barrel anyway.

DWINDLING NUMBERS

Although this is the budget offering in the Umarex range of rotary magazine pistols, it really doesn't give up anything in performance over the more expensive CP88, Beretta 92FS, or Colt 1911. OK, it's got an all-polymer exterior, but the moulding is very sharp with no seams, and all the trademarks are there, including the M&P logo on the rear sight. There's also no nasty white warning graffiti to spoil the lines. I prefer the more traditional CO2 piercing screw over the cam system on the CP88 etc., and you don't need to worry about having a tool to hand because there's a tab on the screw.

Given that this was the first time I've used this particular pistol 'in anger', I'm quite pleased with a more than respectable score of 128/180. As you can see from the target pictures, it's a fine line between a hit or a miss, and that wide head shot on Stage 2 cost me dearly. I was pleased not to have hit the hostage on Stage 3, though! I'm sure that with a bit more practice I'll be able to match my previous best scores in the 150s and give anyone shooting the more expensive pistols a run for their money!

The numbers in the competitions have been dwindling of late, so I really hope reading this will inspire more people to just have a go. It doesn't cost anything, and you really have nothing to lose. Perhaps you could get a few people together at the club or home range and shoot it as a group.

So, there you are. I've explained all you need to know about putting some purpose into your pistol shooting and given you an idea of what equipment will do the job. The rest is down to you. We really hope to see you in the competition!

Paddy Says:
Thank you, Adrian, for writing about our Police Pistol Competition whilst using your S&W M&P45. I've also entered this competition with various types of pistols, such as the M9A3, and it's great fun – it also tests your nerves for NOT hitting the hostage on the third stage! As Adrian stated, it gives purpose to using our airguns in a fun way. All the details of this competition and all others are within our website: www.umarexboysclub.co.uk under the Monthly Competitions tab – it would be great to see some new recruits and have our own Police Academy!

SCAN ME

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BASC MEMBER GET A MEMBER

STILL GOING CLUBBING!

When it comes to enjoying our sport, there's no age limit – as ***TERRY DOE*** discovers

When we're young and unstoppable, the enthusiasm for our sport can be almost overwhelming. That's certainly how it was for me during every phase of my shooting life, and I always wondered what would happen to all that enthusiasm when I retired. I've enjoyed the happy state of retirement for over a year, now, and I'm here to tell you some great news. You see, whilst the positive mania to go shooting, in whatever form that possessed me at the time, has definitely calmed, the pleasure I get from my sport is as intense as ever. In short, my airgunning desires have found new directions, but the buzz remains, and if anything – it's increased.

JUST ME?

Regular readers will know that I'm a 'glass half-full' type of chap, and I'm always keen to bring good news to those who take part in our sport. With this in mind, I wanted to assure the thousands of dedicated airgunners out there, that, when the fires of youth fizzle out, and our bodies begin to grumble about being bent into our usual shooting stances, there's still a whole world of airgun-based enjoyment out there. Once I'd confirmed my own post-retirement shooting pleasures, my next task was to find more airgunners with similar experiences. After all, I've been abnormally obsessed with this sport for most of my life, so it was always likely that I'd find a positive direction or two, but if I were the exception, rather than the rule, that wouldn't bode well for the normal majority.

IF IN DOUBT – GO TO THE CLUB

The largest crop of senior airgunners within my orbit can be found at my club, and not only would I have plenty of them to interview, they'd be as blisteringly honest with their answers as they always are. I've exploited my silver clubmates for years when testing new rifles and hardware, mainly by asking their opinions of test products. This lot never holds back, and they have a zillion years of experience between them, so I knew that when I rocked up at the club on a Tuesday morning, I would have no shortage of data to mine. I'm delighted to say that the lads were on top form.

ALL FOR ONE … AND ONE FOR ALL

My original plan was to interview lots of the over-60'ish airgunners, then compare and contrast their experiences and distil the essence of what lies ahead for those currently knocking on the door of retirement. After five chats, the responses were so similar, it was obvious that no distillation was required. These lads were in total agreement, and given the amount of firmly-held views they'd accumulated over the years, this state of accord was nothing short of amazing.

IT'S A CLUB THING

The first thing that rang throughout my findings, was that the club formed the focal point of everything. It's the hub, the common ground, and the shared facility, that turns a single shooter into a member of a like-minded community. Come rain or shine, winter or summer, the club offers so much that matters to these airgunners.

Curiously, it's not just that the club provides an all-weather range, plenty of bench rests, and dozens of targets in varied situations. In fact, the main source of pleasure, and very possibly, the main reason these seniors come to the club so regularly, isn't based on the shooting side of things at all.

BANTER AND TALKING COBBLERS

More than anything else, these shooters enjoy the friendly, and frequently merciless, banter that crackles around the range when they get together. This is undoubtedly a fellowship of airgunners, and every one of them told me that enjoying the exchanges, the industrial strength sarcasm and the Mickey-taking that goes with it, is the foundation of their sport.

Make no mistake, this lot appreciates the guns and gear, and there are some remarkable examples of air-powered technology on display every time they turn up, but the real deal is what my Irish friends refer to as 'the craic'.

THEIR SPORT, THEIR WAY

As a senior shooter myself, these days, I can only endorse the opinions of my clubmates, along with the other happy fact, that when you reach this stage of your shooting life, you conduct your sport in exactly the way you prefer.

Some of the Bisley seniors take part in the multitude of club competitions, and others prefer to challenge no one but themselves, or a mate on the next-door bench, to an informal round of 'how many of those can I hit?' Meanwhile, new guns, gadgets and gear are bought, explored, often modified, and occasionally moved on to make room for the next techno-toy.

NO LIMITS

The pleasure on show at my club during the seniors' midweek get-togethers is a delight to witness, as is the complete lack of pressure to perform or conform. My clubmates are simply interacting as they always do, but as an airgunner who competed for years at an almost unhealthy intensity, I find myself smiling at the prospect of what is to come for me within this fantastic sport.

The message is clear, folks. Airgunning has no age limits, and a fantastic new world is waiting for us all. The future is bright … silver! ✕

Our Alan displays his pistol prowess. He rang the bell twice, then decided to quit while he was winning.

WIN a Colt M4!

This month's competition prize is a superb break-barrel springer rifle from Umarex

We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win the Umarex Colt M4 rifle featured in Dave Barham's Editor's Test review.

Distributed by John Rothery Wholesale, the Colt M4 retails for £254.95 and boasts an authentic American military rifle appearance, and yet is is a full-power, break-barrel air rifle.

Don't be fooled by its replica appearance. Clocking a very respectable 11.7 ft.lbs. through the chronograph, this .177 spring-piston rifle truly is a full-power, sub-12 ft.lbs. UK legal rifle. It's ideal for those who like to collect replicas, but also for anyone who just wants a good quality break-barrel air rifle for plinking in their back garden, or even hunting out in the field. With a removable dummy magazine, this single-shot rifle is as close to the real thing as you can get, plus it's very accurate and a joy to shoot. It's a rather unique rifle in many ways, but you'll have to read Dave's in-depth review on page 14 of this issue to discover why. All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning this awesome rifle is answer the question below and scan the QR code in the box above to enter, before the competition deadline on Wednesday 1st November. If you can't scan the QR code, visit this link: https://bit.ly/WINanumarex

QUESTION

How much does the Umarex Colt M4 weigh, to the nearest pound?

A. 7

B. 8

C. 9

Close date: 01/11/2023. Online entries only. There is one prize. There is no cash alternative. You must be 18 years or over at the time of entry. Winner will be randomly chosen from the pool of correct entries. For full Ts & Cs visit: *www.airgunshooting.co.uk/terms*

A LESSON IN LIFE

TERRY DOE spends a productive day with a shooter who 'won' him in an auction

Two essential elements are required for a coaching session to be productive; the coach has to offer techniques and information that works, and the student must be receptive to change. Within these core requirements lies a many-stranded network, including trust in the coach, the student's desire to improve, and the work ethic that will ultimately decide the outcome of the coaching. Now factor in the vital ingredients of communication and understanding, and when all of these ingredients become part of the mix, a recipe for success is created. It doesn't happen every time, but when it does, it's one of my favourite experiences. I enjoyed such an experience at my club recently, and I'd like to share it with you.

Danny Brookfield turned out to be just about the perfect student. INSET: As soon as Danny unpacked his gear, I knew he was serious about his shooting.

UP FOR AUCTION

Every year, along with many of my fishing mates, I take part in fundraising for a wonderful charity by the name of 'Lucy's Bowl', that raises funds to provide guide dogs for visually impaired people. I do my bit by offering a day's shooting tuition at my club at Bisley to the highest bidder, and this year a chap named Danny Brookfield 'won' me for a very generous donation. Danny turned out to be just about the perfect student, as well as a top bloke, and we had a genuinely productive day.

Danny is a collector of Ripley Rifles, and the example he brought along for his coaching day was fitted with one of Warren Edwards' excellent, fully-adjustable, custom stocks and a 'Big Nikko' scope, so I knew that my student's hardware was already sorted. »

> *"keep making tiny changes to your stance and head position, until you've eliminated as much muscle tension as possible"*

The topics we covered were many and varied, and by detailing them here, I think you'll find quite a few things to help you in your own shooting. Danny is an experienced and accomplished shooter, yet he still found plenty to work on in the future, so study the key points and see what could be in it for you.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Regardless of the experience of the student, I always begin an extensive coaching session with a safety lecture, immediately followed by the fundamental subject of gun fit, and right away we discovered a major point of potential improvement.

Try the following test:

First, with your rifle uncocked and unloaded, adopt the shooting stance you use most – in Danny's case it was sitting – but without mounting your rifle.

Next, with your eyes firmly closed, mount the rifle, and keeping your eyes closed, get yourself as comfortable as possible. Relax into your stance – eyes still closed – and keep making tiny changes to your stance and head position, until you've eliminated as much muscle tension as possible.

As soon as Danny unpacked his gear, I knew he was serious about his shooting.

Once you feel totally comfortable in your stance, open your eyes.

Is your scope in the perfect position, or very close to it, or do you have to make a significant head movement to achieve that? If it's the latter, you're not using your 'natural' head/neck position, and this will usually lead to muscle tension, and eventually muscle fatigue. In Danny's case, he was shifting his head significantly forward to bring his eye into alignment with his scope, and this revealed a compromise.

DANNY'S FIX

Danny's scope was fixed at the limit of its rearward travel, so Danny had to move his head forward to make up for that. This is a basic compromise, and Danny isn't a compromise kind of chap, so once the problem was identified, he came up with his own solution in seconds. "I need a riser block that extends the scope rail. I'll get on that right away." Problem sorted; let's move on to the next phase.

STANCE AND STABILITY

I always ask my pupils to shoot a few targets whilst I study their stance and technique at a forensic level. This can be a bit unnerving for the student, but I make it clear that they need to shoot exactly as they always do, rather than 'being on their best behaviour' because the teacher is watching. My observations of Danny's technique revealed three major areas that I wanted

The 'eyes closed' test revealed a compromise – and Danny isn't a compromise sort of chap.

A minor tweak to Danny's sitting stance optimised stability, and he adapted to it immediately.

Focal rangefinding is a major skill, and like all the others, it requires consistency.

Danny is looking forward to putting in the range time to implant the required changes we discovered at Bisley.

him to think about.

First, during the sitting stance, his right arm wasn't making good contact with his right leg, and this was causing instability. A tiny shift in position locked everything in place, and we moved on to the next phase.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW-THROUGH

Danny had developed a trigger technique that included pushing his trigger finger forward after the rifle had discharged. While this unnecessary movement wasn't ideal, Danny's tendency to lift his head the instant his rifle fired was my first concern. Here's where I deploy my 'postman' analogy, and I think it perfectly explains the mindset behind the largely unappreciated technique of follow-through. First, let me explain what follow-through is, and why it's so important.

In the most basic terms, follow-through is the technique of doing absolutely nothing to mess up everything you've invested in taking the shot. Conversely, and just to ram home the point, without proper follow-through, every element of a successful shot can be ruined. Even more significantly, your technique, results and confidence can either be positively enhanced, or totally corrupted, depending on your follow-through application, or lack of it. Trust me, follow-through is a big deal.

HOW IT WORKS

Once you have finalised your aiming sequence and you release the shot, the shooting process isn't finished, and there's still work to be done. Here's where the 'postman' analogy comes in. A postman's job is to deliver the mail and see it safely to its destination. Your job as a shooter, is to deliver your pellets – not just to launch them – and that job isn't finished until those pellets land, so you need to stay on duty until they do that.

The best way to deliver a pellet exactly where you want it is to maintain perfect aim until you see it strike, but even if you can't actually see that, you simply hold the aim for a split second to give the pellet time to get clear of your influence and fly straight. There's more to it, though.

PLENTY GOING ON

To understand the need for follow-through is to realise that there's still plenty going on with your rifle and the pellet you're shooting, between the time you activate the trigger, and the time the pellet is clear of any interference from you. Think about the sequence of events; in a standard pre-charged pneumatic, the trigger mechanism is tripped, releasing the valve striker, which flies forward and impacts the valve. The valve opens, releases a 'pulse' of air, which travels along the transfer port to reach the pellet. The pellet is now blasted down the barrel and out of the muzzle, followed by the blast of turbulent air. This sequence is short, but it isn't instantaneous, and jerking the trigger and/or lifting your head too soon, can impart micro-movement to the rifle and move it from the intended point of aim.

IT GETS WORSE

Worse still, unless you know what's going wrong, your inaccuracy will be a mystery, because the last thing you saw before releasing the shot, was a perfectly-aimed rifle. Possibly even worse than that, is the fact that this lack of proper follow-through then becomes part of your technique, and your muscles learn to tense for the movement while the pellet is still in the rifle. This muscle tension is rarely consistent, especially if frustration increases it, and the result is a degradation in overall technique, and results. Happily, the remedy is simplicity itself.

AND NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS

To fix the problems caused by a lack of follow-through completely, all you need to do is ... nothing. It's a vital nothing, though, involving holding perfect aim until the pellet is delivered, and absolutely nothing else that might »

wreck consistent accuracy. Sometimes, doing nothing is tricky, but in the case of follow-through, it's the only way to maximise your results, so please train yourself to be a postman, and stay on duty until those pellets are delivered.

FOCUSING ON CONSISTENCY

With the importance of correct follow-through pretty much beaten to death, Danny and I moved on to his rangefinding technique. As with so many aspects of shooting technique, the importance of consistency when focusing on the target to define its range cannot be overstated. Focal rangefinding is a major skill, and one which really can mean the difference between success and failure.

Consider this; if you estimate the range of a 45-yard target at 50 yards, you'll effectively be shooting at the top third of the hit zone, rather than the full width of it. This basic error has just doubled your need to get your windage estimation spot-on, because you've halved your 'error zone'. If you do that a few times on a 40-target course, you're seriously reducing your chances of winning. Obviously, the reverse also applies, and Danny understood this immediately, and because he wants to get into field target shooting a bit more, he applied himself totally to the next phase of the coaching.

NOW WE'RE ROCKING

With his scope's 60x magnification to help him, Danny was easy to coach, and he picked up the focusing technique in no time. The Big Nikko Danny was using was fitted with a large custom sidewheel, making the graduations between each range larger and easier to see. The key is to go through the motions of focusing in exactly the same way, and I prefer rotating the sidewheel to bring the target into approximate focus, then 'rocking' the sidewheel back and forth until pin-sharp focus is achieved. I believe it's important to complete the 'rocking' in the same way every time, moving the sidewheel either back or forward to finish the focusing sequence.

When your student is as keen and receptive as Danny Brookfield, coaching becomes the most enjoyable part of the sport.

It's also worth studying new pellet strikes on the target face as your test of consistent focus, because these often 'shine' silver as the point of perfect definition is reached. Again, it's all about being consistent, with your focusing technique, and with the point of focus you're, literally, looking for.

Finally, once your focusing technique is refined, you should be able to go through it at least twice, possibly three times, per target, within the time limit allowed per lane of targets. Personally, if two focusing routines returned the same result, I went on that, but it's always best to develop a system that works best for you.

HOMEWORK AHEAD

By the time our day came to an end and Danny was due to face a long drive home, he knew he had a whole list of 'homework' topics to get stuck into. The new scope riser rail would cause a shift in scope position, and Danny fully accepted that redefining his focusing technique could well result in the need to re-map the ranging marks on his scope's sidewheel, and even the range settings on the elevation turret.

Establishing the slight alteration in his sitting stance, along with his new trigger-release and follow-through technique, would be a combination of range time and repetition, and again, Danny wasn't just willing to put in the work, he was positively looking forward to making those vital changes. As someone who does a fair bit of coaching, it's so rewarding when the effort I put in is matched, and in Danny's case, exceeded, by the enthusiasm of the student.

So, thanks Danny, for a truly uplifting day, and for your generosity in helping such a wonderful charity. You're a top chap, mate, and if you're ever down Bisley way, get in touch and we'll carry on the good work! ✕

"Personally, if two focusing routines returned the same result, I went on that, but it's always best to develop a system that works best for you"

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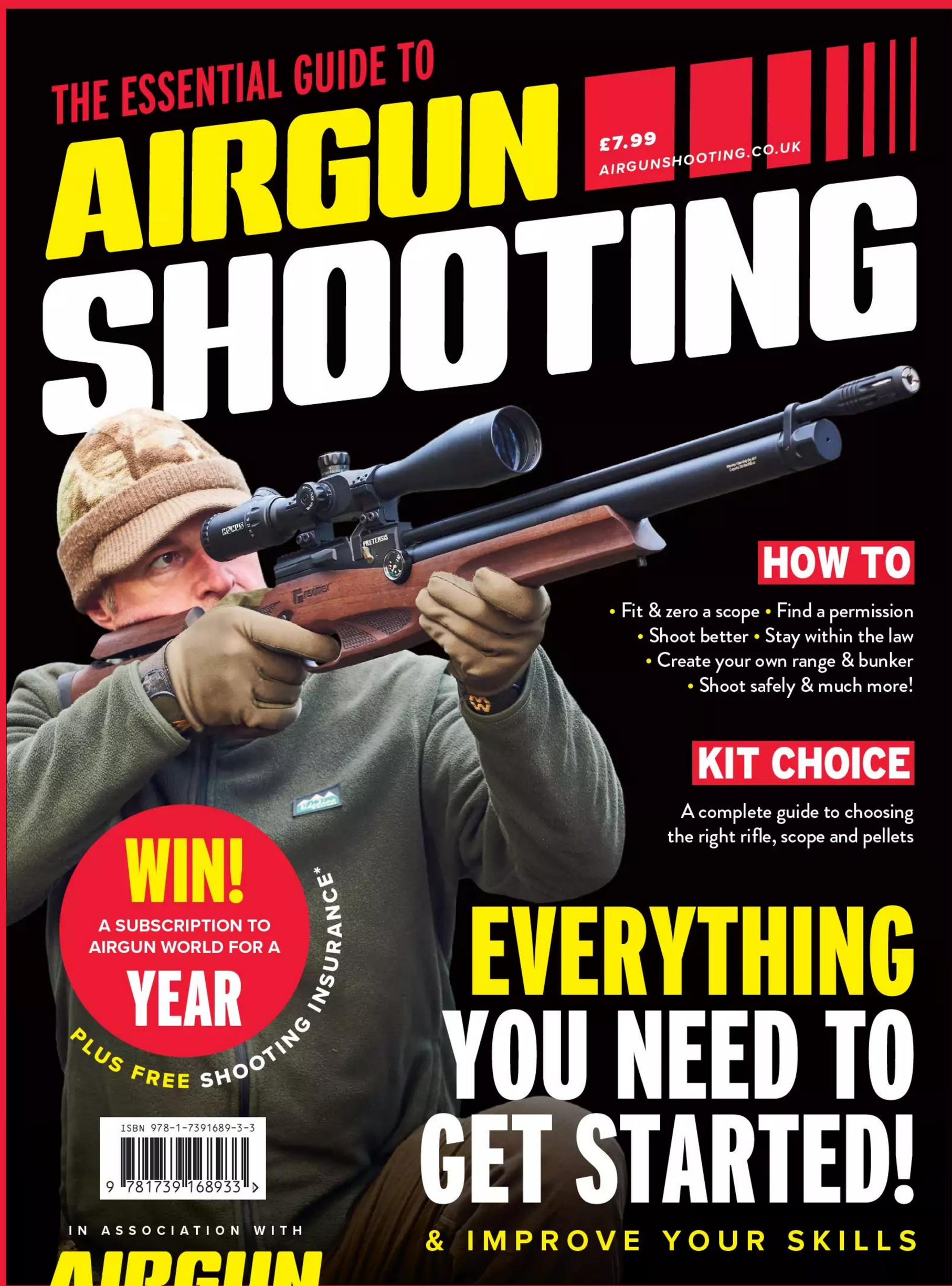

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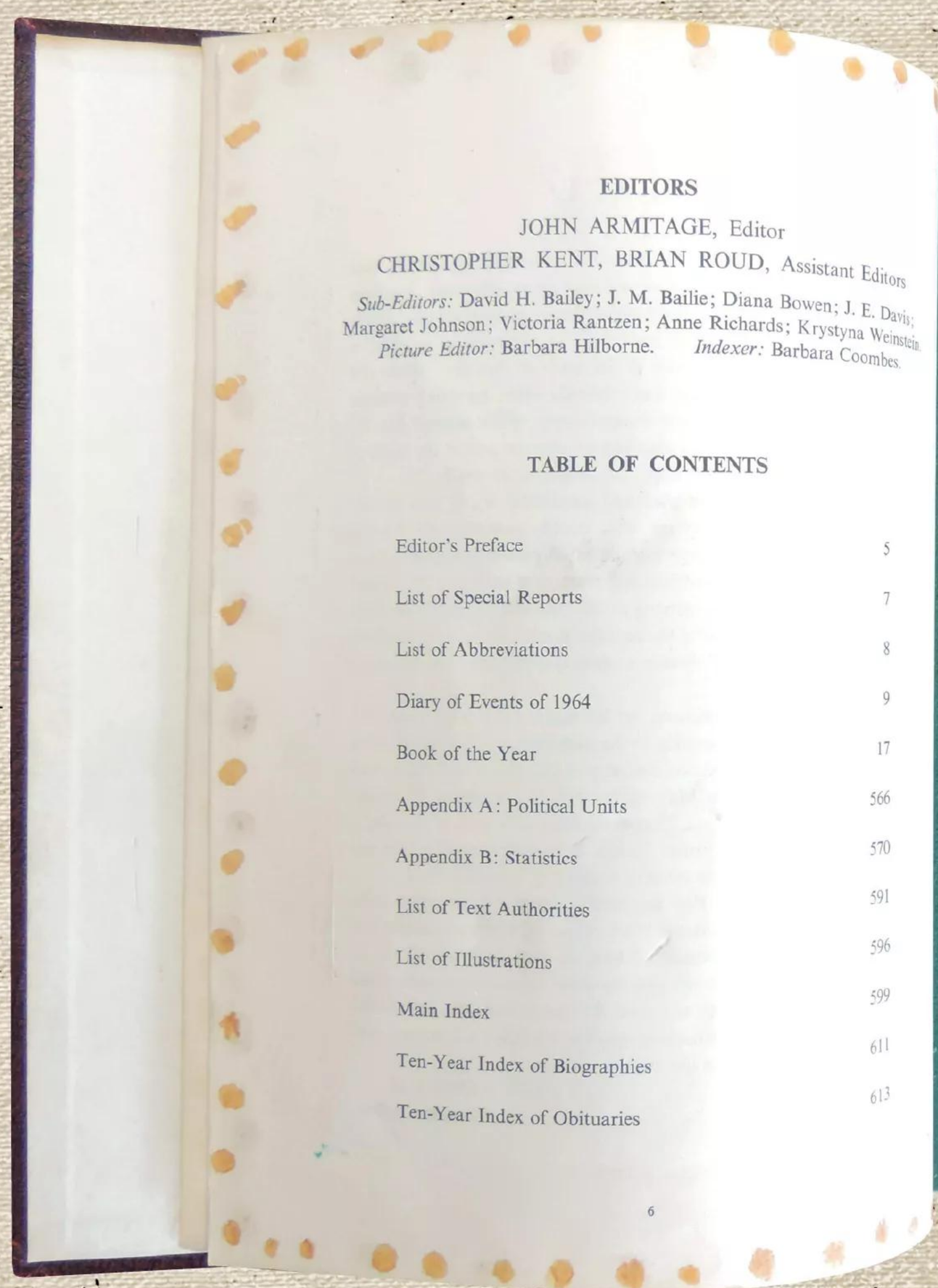
THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

JOHN MILEWSKI heads east to explore the Anics 101 Pistols



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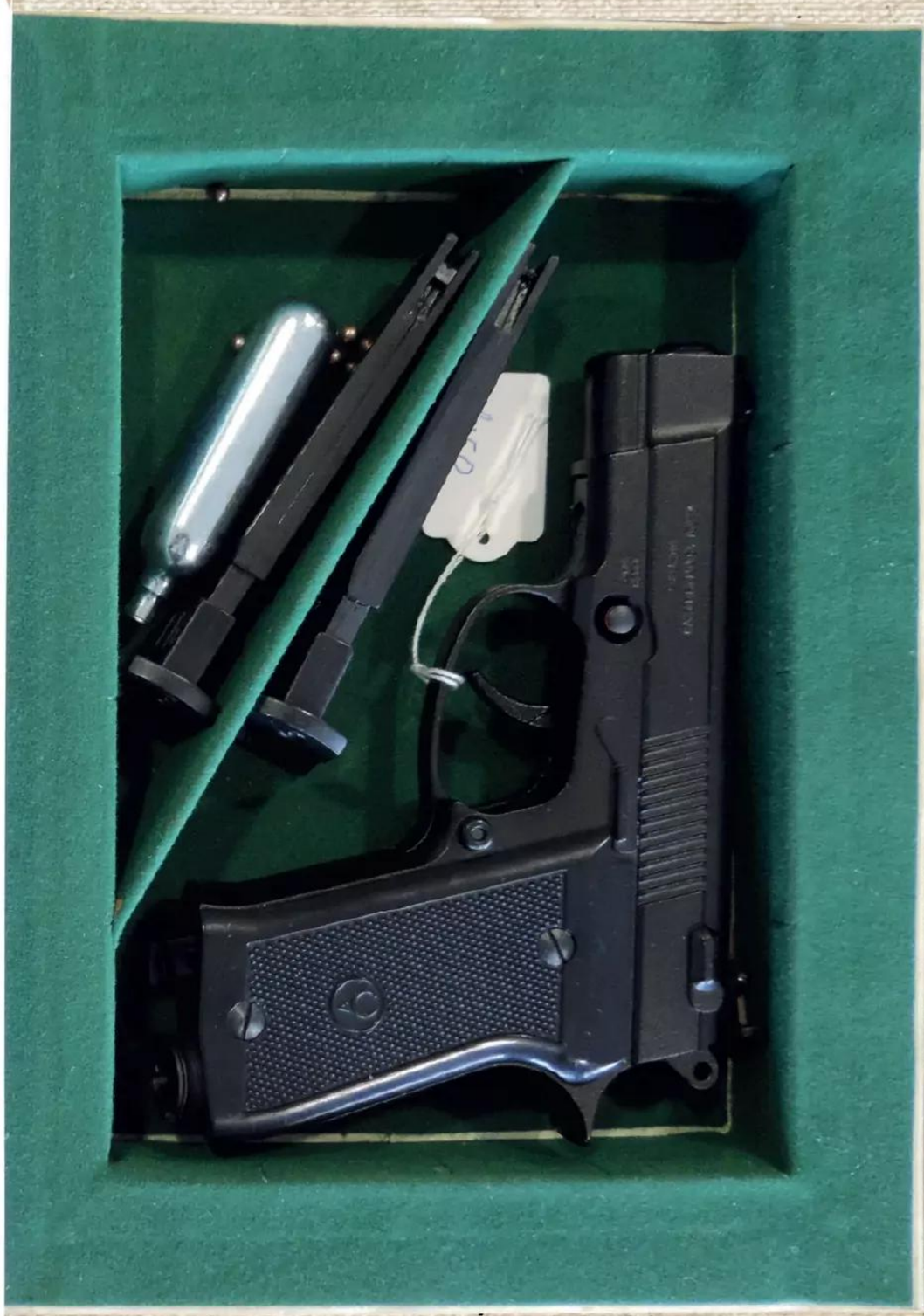


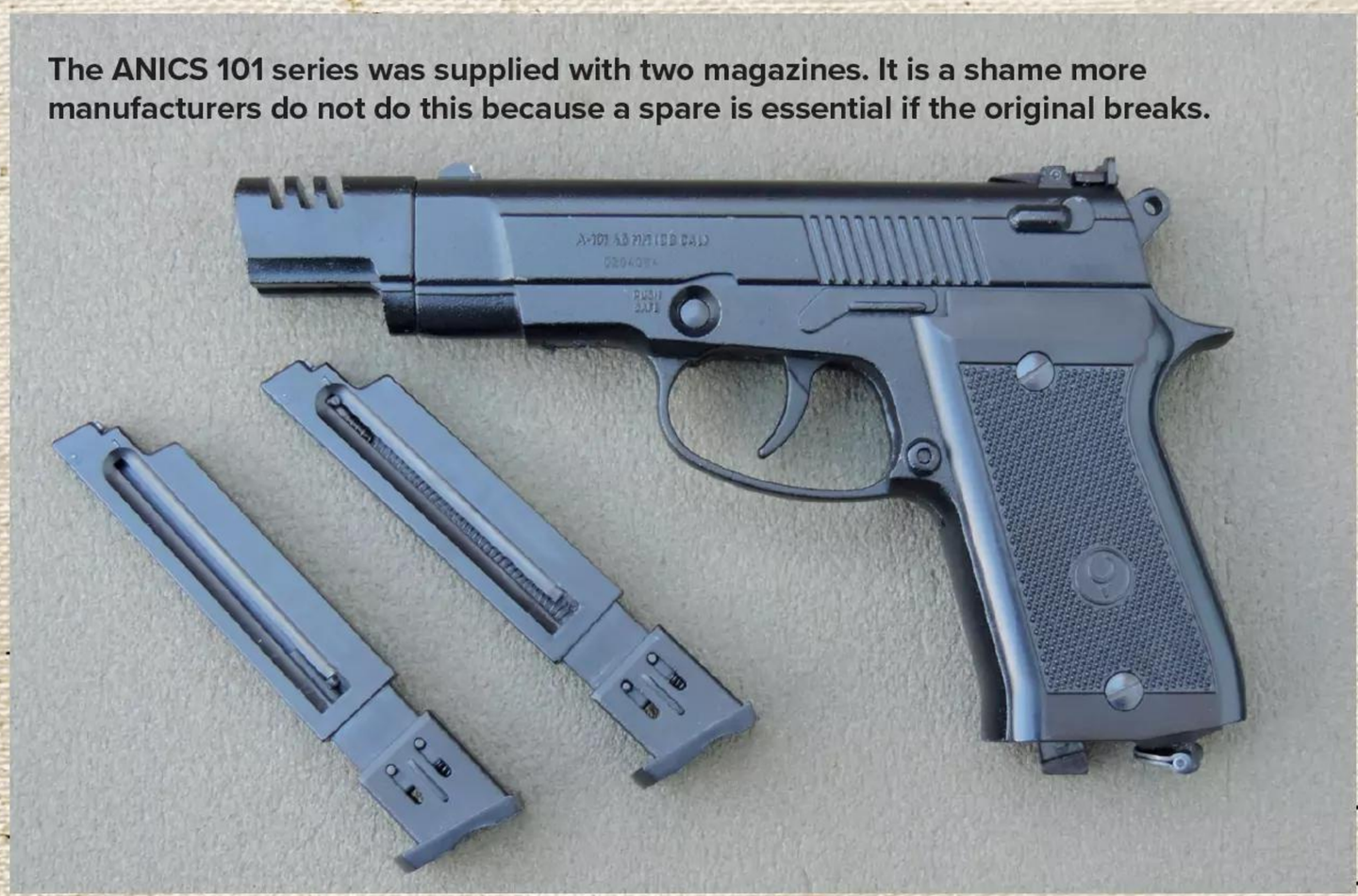
Generally speaking, Russian-made products are built to last. They may not be the prettiest, or incorporate all mod cons, but they are made to survive lots of abuse over their working lives. This is certainly true of the CO2-powered pistols we are taking a look at this month – the ANICS 101 Series.

BACKGROUND

The ANICS Group's International trademark was registered on 6 November 1996. It expired in 2016 and the Moscow-based group is believed to be no longer trading. The UK was first introduced to the ANICS brand not long after CO2 came 'off ticket' in July 1997, and owning one no longer required a Firearms Certificate. This was the only good thing to result from the 1997 pistol ban in the UK, which ended handgun ownership for UK enthusiasts and killed a popular sport overnight.

Initially, London-based Investment and Business Limited imported ANICS »

models to the UK and according to the November 1997 issue of Air Gunner, the range included three models; the basic standard A-101 model was a loose copy of the Browning BDA .380; the A-101M or Magnum was identical, other than it had an extended barrel and imitation muzzle port. It was advertised as having a muzzle velocity of 50fps, whilst the standard model had a slightly reduced MV of 460fps. Both pistols were fitted with fixed rear sights and came supplied in a hard case with two magazines. As well as the A-101, Investment and Business Limited also offered the A-111, which was of a compact and slightly different profile.



The ANICS 101 series was supplied with two magazines. It is a shame more manufacturers do not do this because a spare is essential if the original breaks.

WEBLEY & SCOTT TAKE OVER

By November 2000, Webley International, the parent Company of Birmingham-based Webley & Scott Ltd had taken over as the UK importer and close scrutiny reveals that Webley imported pistols had adjustable rear sights, which were referred to as optional in some manuals. Webley also added a silver coloured A-101 to the range, which was described as having a nickel finish and was supplied with chequered wooden grips. In addition, Webley offered the A-112, which was a larger variant of the A-111 mentioned earlier. Both of these pistols worked on a similar principle as the A-101 series, but were of a slightly different profile. We'll leave these models to one side, along with the ANICS Skiff 3000, as we continue studying the A-101 models.

When I first picked up the A-101 Magnum, my initial impression of the heavy die cast construction was of a solidly built pistol reminiscent of a Soviet T34 tank. Incredibly, its weight came in at 1078 grams - 2lbs 6oz in old money.

Taking a closer look, we can see the distinct profile of controls such as; safety catch, hammer, slide release, magazine release catch and even an ejection port with extractor. However, don't get too excited about these details because the controls are die cast into the slide and frame. What looks like a slide-mounted safety and magazine release catch behind the trigger aren't; they and the ring-profiled hammer are all dummies.

MAGAZINE

The A-101 series were initially supplied with two stick-type magazines and I wish all manufacturers did this as with a multi-shot CO2 pistol – if you break or lose a magazine, the pistol cannot function. A spare is also useful because two fully-loaded, 15-shot magazines allow you to fire up to 30 shots without having to recharge either magazine.

Surprisingly, unlike the rest of the pistol, the magazines were made of plastic and do not look as robust as the rest of the pistol. Still, they should last if you look after them. The pistol's manual explains how to get the best from each magazine and prevent undue wear, particularly during the loading process. Firstly, use a fingernail against light spring pressure and lock the follower in place. Then push against a spring-loaded tab at the top of the magazine to open up the feeding aperture wide enough for you to drop up to 15 BBs or copper-coated lead balls into the magazine. Release finger pressure against the tab and the locked follower. The magazine is now loaded and ready for use.

It is easy to unload - just lock the follower down to relieve tension on the BBs, then push against the spring-loaded tab at the top and BBs will pour out into your hand. I found loading and unloading the ANICS magazines easier than virtually any other brand I could think of. The magazine has a short-sprung base, the purpose of which seems to be to maintain consistent tension between the magazine and barrel-loading aperture to enable reliable feeding when a loaded magazine is in place; store the pistol with magazine removed to prevent undue spring wear.

We'll continue our study of the ANICS A-101 with a look at some of its quirkier features and take one to the range. ✕

The A-101M can be identified by the presence of a fake compensator and extended barrel internally.

The ANICS models were fitted with an unusual safety button. Other controls are part of the casting and very little moves on this pistol.

The magazine inserts in front of the CO2 chamber.

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ROSIE'S RECIPIES

MOTLEY MEATBALLS

ROSIE BARHAM combines some mundane ingredients for a very special pasta meal

It's that time of year again. There's a slightly smoky, autumnal smell in the air, and we're into the season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness' in late September, early October. This is my favourite time of year, for quite a few reasons, one of which is the banishment of salad as a main meal. I can now eat hot food with gravy, which most of us don't enjoy when the weather is hot. There are only so many combinations of salad vegetables that you can create to accompany the inevitable barbecued meat, or seafood platter, and I do like my comfort food.

I had some friends over for the evening recently, one of whom arrived bearing a tea-tray full of 'nibbles'; sliced red and yellow peppers, tomatoes, cucumber, black olives, crackers and dips, nuts .... We did our best to do justice to it, but there was quite a bit left, so I added a chopped onion to the veg, bunged it all in a pot with some chicken stock, seasoning, the last of the tomatoes from my garden, and knocked up a thick sauce.

In the 'leftover' compartment of my freezer, I found some venison mince from last year's bounty and had a light-bulb moment. Venison is very lean meat, but if you add some bacon, or pork fat to it, you get a succulent mixture, ideal for meatballs. Combined with the sauce, and some pasta, I'd have enough to make several meals for the days when I didn't feel like cooking. It worked a treat, and you don't have to use venison – any minced game will give you a decent result. You can also freeze the meatballs and/or sauce separately or in portions – a winner on every level!

INGREDIENTS

- Minced venison
- Chopped onion
- A few bacon rashers, diced
- One egg to bind
- Sauce: Red and orange peppers, tomatoes, black olives (pitted), cucumber because I don't waste anything, and onion.

METHOD

1. Put all the sauce vegetables into a pot, add a pint of chicken stock
2. Simmer until veg are tender, then zizz with a hand blender. It should be thick and gloopy. If it isn't then reduce the liquid with a fast-simmer for a few minutes.
3. Place the venison mince in a bowl with the onion, bacon and egg. Mix well.
4. Form into small balls and fry gently in a little oil until browned. Shake the pan from time to time so that they cook on all sides.
5. Add the sauce to the meatballs sauce and simmer for 15 minutes, whilst you cook the pasta.
6. Serve with some grated parmesan, or just cheddar – and enjoy!

TOP TIP

'Fast-simmer' means bubbles breaking gently on the surface

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THE BEST PELLET

JIM TYLER looks at how to find which pellet best suits your rifle and needs

Helping to run Nomads HFT club means that I get to chat with, and learn from the experiences of a lot of HFT shooters, and one of the most interesting topics crops up whenever a new pellet that seems suitable for HFT is introduced to the market. The last one that caused a real stir was the Chinese QYS, which followed the Czech-made 7.9gn Express, and the latest must-try pellet on the HFT circuit is the H&N Baracuda 8.

The usual sequence of events is that a number of HFT shooters will try a new pellet, and if initial results seem favourable, lots of HFT shooters pile in, and the initial imported batch rapidly disappears from the shelves, which is exactly what happened earlier this year with the H&N Baracuda 8.

Brian Samson, owner of the Doncaster Airgun Range, posted a thread about the Baracuda 8 on the Shooting the Breeze forum on March 22nd, which started a frantic hunt that persisted for the next two months, for shops that had any stocks of the pellets. I was fortunate enough to be given a near-full tin to test by a Nomads member who had tried them, but decided they did not suit his Steyr. I'll return to the Baracuda 8 later in the article.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Outdoor target shooters, both field target and hunter field target, have very specific requirements of their pellets; obviously, they need the pellet to connect reliably with the target's kill zone, which can be 45 yards or 55 yards distant in HFT and FT respectively, but they also require the pellet to perform regardless of conditions. Where an airgun hunter might decide that the wind is too strong for humane hunting, outdoor target shooters shoot in any wind that is short of life-threatening. I vividly remember attending an event in the mid-1980s at Blaenau Gwent AGC, halfway up what might best be described as a small mountain and in a raging blizzard with horizontal snow. Whilst conditions are rarely quite so bad, FT and HFT events take place in high wind, and so a pellet's susceptibility to wind drift is an important consideration. Not everyone shoots in adverse conditions, so let's begin by considering the criteria that apply to all airgun shooters, starting with a pellet's compatibility with the rifle and barrel.

RIFLE

Many people believe that lighter pellets give higher muzzle energy in springers, heavier pellets in PCPs, but in reality, that's no more than a general trend, and like all trends, there are plenty of exceptions, so if muzzle energy is high on your list of requirements, start your testing with a chronoscope.

Always remember that the only thing a chronoscope measures is velocity, and if it also displays muzzle energy, that is not a measurement, but a calculation based on the value you entered for pellet weight. Only a proportion of the pellets in a tin will be near the advertised weight, and so it is imperative that you weigh the individual pellets if you want meaningful results for kinetic energy.

If the muzzle energy, velocity and consistency are acceptable, it's time to move on to the (in my opinion) more important matter of accuracy, or to give it the correct title, precision. The ideal would be to test in a windless indoor range, but few have access to that, and so the best most of us can do is wait for low wind conditions. I usually leave testing until late afternoon, or in the summer, early to mid-evening, because that is the time of day that the wind is most likely to be light. The consistency of the wind is just as important as its strength, so avoid days when the wind gusts and switches direction, and shoot into or with a following wind if possible, because it will have far less effect than cross wind.

It is good policy to clean the barrel thoroughly before testing a new pellet, then allow it to create its own leading by shooting the new pellets through it before commencing accuracy testing. Because you are testing the rifle and pellet, and not your own shooting ability, it is important to test from the most stable position, which in my case means seated behind a table with cushions to rest the rifle on.

The temptation is to shoot groups, and the advantage is that you end up with something you can measure, to compare with groups shot with other pellets. Before trying to shoot groups, I prefer to see whether the pellet can reliably pass through the 15mm kill zone of a resettable target at 30 yards, a 20mm kill at 40 yards, and a 25mm kill at 45 yards, first because it's more enjoyable than shooting at a piece of card, and second, because if the pellet fails this test then there's no point in wasting time trying to shoot groups with it.

PURPOSE

Your choice of pellet will depend on what sort of shooting you intend for it, and we have already seen that, for »

outdoor target shooters, resistance to wind drift is a hugely important criteria, but incredibly difficult to test, because the wind direction and strength is rarely exactly the same for every shot. After shooting an HFT target in windy conditions, it is common for shooting companions to discuss how much allowance they gave for wind drift, and to find that one shot straight at the kill zone, the other well outside it, yet both knocked the target down, and it is due entirely to what the wind did during the pellet's flight.

I'm sure that a lot of HFT shooters will give a new pellet a try, and if they happen to test in adverse wind, sometimes wrongly conclude that it is too susceptible to wind drift, and swiftly return to their usual pellet. There is a better way to test.

Thanks to ballistician, Miles Morris, we know that susceptibility to wind drift depends on the pellet's actual flight time, with relation to what the flight time would be if the pellet had maintained its muzzle velocity all the way to the target, the difference being called 'lag'. If you have two pellets that give similar muzzle velocity, recording the velocity both at the muzzle and downrange will allow you to find the average velocity, and from that, the flight time and lag, which will give a good indication of which is the more susceptible to wind drift.

Lag time at 40 yards (120 feet) = (120/MV) – (120/AV), where MV is muzzle velocity and AV is average velocity. The greater the lag, the more susceptible the pellet to wind drift.

HUNTING

As well as precision (accuracy), many who use air rifles for pest control will have an additional criterion in the selection of a pellet, namely terminal ballistics, which is the science of the behaviour and effect of the pellet when it reaches the target.

Many people write about the pellet 'dumping' its energy in the target, which is wrong, and what the kinetic energy of the pellet really does is perform work in displacing material in the target. In the past, I have used flat-head pellets for hunting on the basis that the very trait that degrades their external ballistic performance (losing velocity more quickly than round-head pellets) enhances their terminal ballistics; in other words, they do more damage.

Nowadays, with the benefit of decades of experience, including using .22 rimfire with up to 140 ft.lbs. at the muzzle, I don't use any pellets other than whatever round head gives the best precision for my bit of rabbit and squirrel control, because I have found that shot placement counts far more than shot damage. That's not for everyone, though, and if a pellet delivers the necessary precision, the more damage it does on arrival, the better.

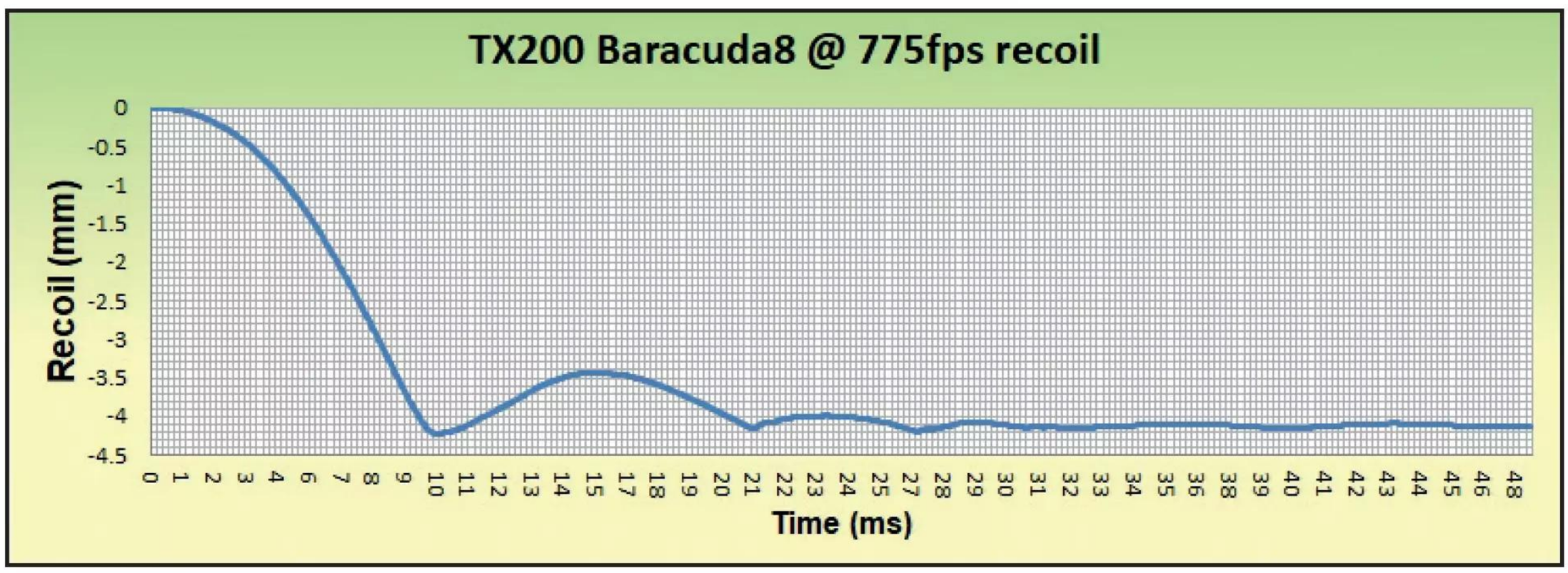
BARACUDA 8

According to the text on the tin label, the Baracuda 8 weighs in at 8.44gn, and according to the H&N web site, has a ballistic coefficient (BC) of .026, which bodes well for the wind drift resistance of the pellet, if the BC figure proves accurate.

The Baracuda 8 (left) has a more pronounced dome than most round-head pellets, which may explain the claimed 0.026 BC.

In my spare TX200, the Baracuda 8 gave around 10fps less than the Air Arms Field I usually feed the rifle, and it passed the 15mm KZ at 30 yards test easily. The muzzle velocity drop through my S510 was nearer 20fps, and the reason for the small loss of velocity with both the springer and PCP is simply that the H&N pellet is made from a harder lead alloy, which increases pellet-to-barrel friction, and which also increased the force needed to thumb the pellet into the TX200 breech.

The second batch of Baracuda 8 arrived in the UK, and I was impressed enough to order five tins. These pellets were a fraction slimmer than the earlier batch, a much easier fit in the breech, and gave pretty well the same muzzle velocity as the rifle's usual diet of Air Arms Field. After shooting a tinful through my spare TX200, I felt confident enough to use them in my main TX200 for rabbit control, in which they offer one big advantage over softer pellets, which is that I can chuck a handful into the pocket of whatever shirt or jacket I'm wearing, safe in the knowledge that the skirts won't get damaged – they are well hard. ✕



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